

# FIGHTING FOR A FUTURE

Millennials Tackle Criminal Justice Reform

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# Introduction and Overview of Recommendations

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## Introduction

Millennials are coming of age in a time of great uncertainty. Still suffering from the economic consequences of coming of working age during the Great Recession, Millennials simultaneously face the struggles of the soaring cost of higher education, rampant gun violence, and a broken criminal justice system. Issues like mass incarceration, sentencing reform, recidivism and re-entry, community policing, and police brutality place a particularly heavy burden on young people.

Research shows that young people of color are significantly more likely to be incarcerated than white youth.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, young people are killed by police at higher rates than other age groups.<sup>2</sup> Widespread attention to cases of police brutality, including the murders of Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Michael Brown, Rekia Boyd, Freddie Gray, and more, have demonstrated how young people are on the front lines of advocating for criminal justice reform. But while their activism is often seen, their policy proposals are not always heard. Consequently, Generation Progress embarked on a Millennial Criminal Justice Roundtable tour of four American cities, with the goal of identifying Millennial-driven solutions to the real, immediate, and systemic problems of an unfair criminal justice system.

Working closely with Bruce Franks, a member of Generation Progress' #Fight4AFuture Gun Violence Prevention and Criminal Justice Reform Network and a community leader in his hometown of St. Louis, Generation Progress traveled to Columbia, S.C.; Baltimore, Md.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and Dallas, Texas. A diverse group of stakeholders — activists, organizers, policy experts, academics, advocates, law enforcement agents, elected officials, and entrepreneurs — were convened to engage in open, honest, and intentional conversations around criminal justice reform.

Franks' own success developing community-based programs served as a model for the four roundtables. As founder of 28 to Life, a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing gun violence and tackling systemic inequality, Franks built trust between law enforcement and St. Louis citizens and strengthened the local economy through job training programs for underrepresented communities.

Roundtables organized by 28 to Life convened law enforcement representatives, formerly incarcerated individuals, and young people from violence-stricken neighborhoods of St. Louis; Generation Progress' intent was to apply a similar model to the Millennial Criminal Justice Roundtable tour.

This report is the product of those conversations. While Millennials in the various cities held unique perspectives on criminal justice reform, a number of common themes emerged. This report synthesizes those themes into a set of 10 Millennial-driven solutions to repairing the criminal justice system, targeted at local, state, and federal government leaders. Millennials are already fighting for a future and driving these issues forward. The only question is: will their leaders listen?

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## Overview of Recommendations

Among the conversations in Columbia, Baltimore, Phoenix, and Dallas, Millennials devised solutions that fit three primary categories: race and privilege, community investment, and law enforcement reform and accountability.

### Race and Privilege

1. Communities should provide safe spaces<sup>3</sup> for all youth to discuss and explore **RACISM AND WHITE PRIVILEGE**, and how these entities affect the day-to-day experiences and consequences of being a young person of color in America.

### Community Investment

2. States, cities, and municipalities should dedicate **MORE RESOURCES TO EDUCATION**, especially in low-income school districts that house high populations of disenfranchised communities.
3. States, cities, and municipalities should invest in **MENTORING PROGRAMS** at all levels to provide youth with successful role models that come from similar backgrounds and lived experiences.
4. States, cities, and municipalities should **REMOVE BARRIERS TO RE-ENTRY** and give those convicted of crimes a better chance at obtaining employment.

- States, cities, and municipalities should **RE-ALLOCATE POLICING FUNDS** to community investment programs and initiatives that emphasize academic, economic, and social prosperity.

### Law Enforcement Reform and Accountability

- Police departments and the court system as a whole should **REFLECT THE COMMUNITY** that they represent. Police departments in particular should hire individuals with diverse backgrounds and encourage hiring within the jurisdictions officers will be patrolling.
- Police departments should expand their **TRAINING REGIMENS** to include: bias training, de-escalation training, diversity training, and mental health competency.
- Police departments should provide residents with **TRANSPARENT PROCESSES** for reporting and challenging police misconduct.
- Police departments should provide **SAFE SPACES** for officers to report wrongdoing observed of other officers.
- Police departments should implement **COMMUNITY POLICING** initiatives that encourage police officers to build relationships with community members and residents.

## 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

### FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES AND A FAIRER CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

#### RACE AND PRIVILEGE

Communities should provide **safe spaces** for all youth to discuss and explore racism and white privilege.



#### COMMUNITY INVESTMENT



States, cities, and municipalities should dedicate more **resources to education**, especially in low-income school districts.

States, cities, and municipalities should invest in **mentoring programs** at all levels to provide youth with successful role models.



States, cities, and municipalities should **remove barriers to re-entry** and give those convicted of crimes a better chance at obtaining employment.

States, cities, and municipalities should **re-allocate policing funds** to community investment programs and initiatives that emphasize academic, economic, and social prosperity.



#### LAW ENFORCEMENT REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY



Police departments and the court system as a whole should **reflect the community** that they represent.

Police departments should **expand their training regimens** to include: bias training, de-escalation training, diversity training, and mental health competency.



Police departments should provide residents with **transparent processes for reporting** and challenging police misconduct.

Police departments should provide **safe spaces** for officers to **report wrongdoing** observed of other officers.



Police departments should implement **community policing initiatives** that encourage police officers to build relationships with community members and residents.

#### GENERATION PROGRESS

# Millennial Criminal Justice Recommendations, Explained

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## Race and Privilege

1

**Communities should provide safe spaces for all youth to discuss and explore racism and white privilege, and how these entities affect the day-to-day experiences and consequences of being a young person of color in America.**

Across all four cities, participants raised the importance of race and privilege in the United States. Millennials across the country repeatedly centered the criminal justice reform discussion around the intersection of race and justice in America. They routinely cited examples of how disproportionately and unfairly the justice system targets minority communities. Participants in the roundtables raised the topic of white privilege, defining it as advantages enjoyed by white Americans that afford them the ability to experience lesser consequences when they come into contact with the criminal justice system, despite committing similar crimes.

The United States accounts for less than five percent of the world's population but 25 percent of its incarcerated inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> And within the U.S., black people are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of white people.<sup>5</sup> While black people represent 13 percent of the overall U.S. population, 40 percent of those incarcerated are black.<sup>6</sup> Also disproportionately represented, Latinos make up 16 percent of the overall population, but 19 percent of the incarcerated population.<sup>7</sup> Black women represent over 30 percent of the women incarcerated in the U.S. and Latino women represent 17 percent, despite both groups making up a mere fraction of the U.S. female population.<sup>8</sup>

Millennials at the roundtables wanted to discuss these statistics and how mass incarceration translated to the local level, and share their experiences with decision makers in the room. Many of the people of color shared examples of being mistreated by local police while their white counterparts discussed generally avoiding such encounters. Others shared ideas on how best to counteract the effects of white privilege, with some favoring conversation and public acknowledgement of white privilege among white people, while others questioned the real-world practical changes that would stem from such an approach.

Black Americans are incarcerated at nearly

6x

the rate of white Americans.

The young people in all four cities had a lot of ideas regarding tackling white privilege as it relates to criminal justice reform. Suggestions included supporting marginalized communities to lead their own movements and organizations (thought leadership that is representative of the individuals who are actually marginalized), hosting regular community forums to discuss race and privilege, instituting privilege and bias training at all levels of education and government, reframing biased and coded language, and challenging white people to educate their white peers about privilege and being effective allies.

Creating safe spaces was a popular suggestion among the attendees. Millennials reinforced the need for safe spaces that provide an opportunity for youth of color to discuss their experiences amongst themselves and come up with positive actions to counteract their sometimes-tense interactions with law enforcement. This has been visible across the United States, as black college students have demanded people of color only spaces to discuss community issues.<sup>9</sup> Other attendees stressed the importance of inclusive safe spaces such as the one created by Generation Progress. They emphasized that it is important to have the victims of police brutality, law enforcement, and white youth in the room to discuss interactions and come up with community-building initiatives.

### **What is a safe space?**

A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, age, or physical or mental ability; a place where the rules guard each person's self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others.

*Source: Advocates for Youth*

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## Community Investment

2

**States, cities, and municipalities should dedicate more resources to education, especially in low-income school districts that house high populations of disenfranchised communities.**

There is an overriding notion that to fix the criminal justice system, we must reform mandatory minimum sentencing, end private prisons, and decriminalize marijuana use. These things are all true, but we must also focus on the foundational issues that created this system of injustice, otherwise the system's inequities will only continue in alternate forms. In Columbia, Baltimore, Phoenix, and Dallas, Millennials expressed a strong interest in addressing root causes to criminalization and incarceration. Repeatedly, they called for more funding to education, citing the correlation between education, crime, and incarceration. A 2003 study found that male inmates were roughly twice as likely as those outside prison to not have completed high school.<sup>10</sup> Devoting more funding to low-income school districts would

help provide young people with the skills and academic development required to be successful and ultimately avoid incarceration.

Educational disparities often begin early on in children’s academic careers. In Baltimore, Millennials explained that early childhood education is a critical piece of the school-to-prison pipeline. Black children are twice as likely to be expelled from pre-K than white children.<sup>11</sup> Zero-tolerance policies, implicit biases of teachers, lack of access to resources, and mental health factors all contribute to disparities in early childhood expulsions.<sup>12</sup> Addressing these educational disparities requires a nuanced understanding of the issues at hand, and additional funding and resources. In Phoenix, one young person posited:

“How can we make quality education more attainable for students from diverse backgrounds?”

One of the issues lies in the diversity of America’s teacher workforce. While minority students have become a majority in the country’s public schools, more than 80 percent of teachers are white.<sup>13</sup> This trend fosters a unique and intricate challenge for our educational institutions. How can white teachers be sensitive to the complex challenges of their students, if they do not share the same lived experiences? A lack of understanding sometimes leads to unfair treatment of minority students and increased expulsion rates, which can thereby result in increased incarceration rates of young people of color.<sup>14</sup> In order to fully address this issue, lawmakers should devote additional funding and resources to recruiting teachers from diverse backgrounds and mandate cultural competency training for all teachers so that they are better equipped to teach an increasingly diverse generation of students.

Beyond the social merits of investing more in education, it is also good economic policy. On average, the nation spends \$12,401 a year to educate a student.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, states’ average annual cost per inmate is \$28,323.<sup>16</sup> Millennials in Dallas argued that this should be a convincing argument for lawmakers to invest in education and thereby proactively dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.



Black children are **twice as likely** to be expelled from pre-K than white children.

3

**States, cities, and municipalities should invest in mentoring programs at all levels to provide youth with successful role models who come from similar backgrounds and lived experiences.**

Millennials explained how mentor figures can play an important role to help young people stay on a positive track, avoid getting involved in criminal activity, and ultimately lend to their opportunity and success. In Dallas, young people proposed developing mentoring programs in the communities that are most impacted by the criminal justice system. They discussed how their friends and family members did not always have successful figures to look up to and learn from, and had they had mentor figures, academic and economic success would have been more achievable.

One particular issue that Millennials in Dallas referenced was the lack of mentoring programs that exist for young people with incarcerated parents.

A recent Center for American Progress report estimates that, “between 33 million and 36.5 million children in the United States—nearly half of U.S. children—now have at least one parent with a criminal record.”<sup>17</sup> The report explains that parental criminal records compound the numerous challenges low-income families already face.<sup>18</sup> Given these findings, it should be clear to states, cities, and municipalities that investing in mentoring programs will pay dividends in terms of economic opportunity and overall prosperity.

Though emphasized by Generation Progress roundtable attendees, the idea of challenging states, cities, and municipalities to create mentoring programs is not new. Recognizing the momentous value in mentoring programs, President Obama launched the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) initiative in 2014. The MBK initiative implores local levels of government and businesses to connect young people to mentoring programs, support local networks, and help young people develop the skills they need to be successful.<sup>19</sup> The White House reports that over 200 government leaders across 43 states and the District of Columbia have agreed to participate in the initiative.<sup>20</sup> While the White House has made great strides to increase mentorship programs across the country, many communities still lack these programs. More leaders should work to



## MENTORSHIPS ARE CHANGING COMMUNITIES IN COLUMBIA, SC

### ZAKIYA ESPER

*Founder of Sowing Seeds into the Midlands*

When starting Sowing Seeds into the Midlands, Zakiya Esper expected to run into issues differentiating her budding organization from existing programs for troubled youth. But seeing the scarcity of existing programs from working in the non-profit world, especially for providing mentors, was staggering. “I think that’s the thing. I think everybody assumes that somebody’s [already] doing it,” Esper says. “It’s really bizarre, because [providing mentors] seems like a simple enough thing... People get really excited about what I’m doing, which I appreciate... but I’m not doing anything innovative.” The mentors Sowing Seeds seeks to provide in many ways are as much friends as they are role models, undergoing extensive training. In addition to mentoring, Sowing Seeds offers counseling, tutoring, and life skills development.

create mentoring programs in their communities, working directly with the young people who are most affected in order to ensure the efficacy of these programs.

# 4

## **States, cities, and municipalities should remove barriers to re-entry and give those convicted of crimes a better chance at obtaining employment.**

Millennials in all four cities expressed concern about job prospects and economic opportunity for those re-entering their community after being incarcerated. One policy that addresses economic opportunity of formerly incarcerated individuals is called banning the box. “Ban the box” initiatives aim to give those convicted of crimes a better chance at obtaining employment by eliminating the checkbox on job applications asking about their previous criminal history. Removing the box ensures that those with criminal records receive the same opportunity as those without records of receiving an interview. Employers can still conduct background checks on the applicants, but removing the box from the application ensures that applicants with criminal records receive consideration before the final hiring decision is made.<sup>21</sup> Young people at the roundtables cited that fair hiring practices are particularly important to their generation, as it could be the difference between having an employed or unemployed parent, or gaining employment themselves, if they had been incarcerated.

Research shows that those with criminal records are significantly less likely to find employment than those without criminal records. Black Americans with a criminal record are even less likely to find employment. One study found that, in the United States, black people with criminal records are 64 percent less likely than white applicants without criminal records to be granted job interviews (white applicants with criminal records were 50 percent less likely to be granted job interviews than those without criminal records).<sup>22</sup> Banning the box is a policy that addresses one form of systemic racism plaguing the criminal justice system. Of the four cities Generation Progress visited, only Columbia, S.C. and Baltimore, Md. have banned the box (though Dallas County has also banned the box).<sup>23 24 25</sup> On the state level, only Maryland has banned the box.<sup>26</sup>

While banning the box is good for formerly incarcerated individuals and the economy, it is also effective in preventing crime. Research shows that formerly incarcerated individuals who are not able to find reliable employment are more likely to recidivate.<sup>27</sup> In fact, one study found that formerly incarcerated

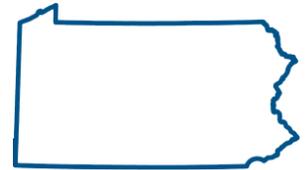
**Twenty-four states have adopted “ban the box” policies** — California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

*Source: National Employment Law Project*

individuals with one year of employment had a 16 percent recidivism rate over three years, while those without employment had a 52.3 percent recidivism rate.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, in order to reduce crime and improve the wellbeing of their citizenship and the economy, states, cities, and municipalities should act quickly to ban the box.

Participants noted that banning the box is only the first step, pointing out that once individuals advance to the interview stage, there are still biases that prevent young people from obtaining employment. For ban the box initiatives to be truly successful, employers must keep an open mind throughout the hiring process, and institutionalize policies that ensure all applicants receive equal opportunity.

While “ban the box” is a great example of a criminal justice system reform intended to help formerly incarcerated individuals gain employment, clean slate is another policy that lawmakers should consider. It automatically seals minor nonviolent cases as long as the offender does not face subsequent convictions. Clean slate legislation allows people with criminal records — and their families — to move on with their lives. It is good for those with records, their families, the economy, and the community.<sup>29</sup> While clean slate is new, the Pennsylvania state legislature is already leading on it. Pennsylvania legislators have introduced clean slate legislation, and the bills are making their way through the state house and senate.<sup>30</sup> Pennsylvania’s progress on clean slate should serve as an example to other states, cities, and the federal government.



Pennsylvania legislators have introduced **clean slate legislation**, and the bills are making their way through the state house and senate.

## **5 States, cities, and municipalities should re-allocate policing funds to community investment programs and initiatives that emphasize academic, economic, and social prosperity.**

At all the roundtables, but especially in Phoenix, attendees expressed that law enforcement in their communities received more funding than needed, and that some of that funding should be reallocated to community investment programs and initiatives. They argued that spending more on policing does not lead to safer or more prosperous communities, but instead results in over-policing of minority neighborhoods and contributes to the mass incarceration epidemic plaguing the country.

Corroborating the words of these young people, a 2012 report showed that the United States spends over \$100 billion a year on policing.<sup>31</sup> The same report explains that increased policing has a disproportionate impact on communities of color, while more effective policing strategies could be introduced rather than simply spending more on law enforcement.<sup>32</sup>

Millennials in Phoenix believe investing in community wellness initiatives would help proactively address crime. The logic is simple: If you invest in community programs that help at-risk individuals gain the resources they need to be successful and live prosperous lives, crime will decline and the community as a whole will be better off. They advised that the government should re-route policing funds to education, re-entry programs, and proactive community-based groups and initiatives that contribute to educating and empowering communities. They explained that policing is only necessary when a community lacks the resources necessary to ensure that the people have their needs met. They said that if these resources were provided to the community, people would not need to turn to violence and crime to have their needs met, and therefore law enforcement would be effectively obsolete.



**The United States spends over \$100 billion a year on policing.**

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## Law Enforcement Reform & Accountability

6

**Police departments and the court system as a whole should reflect the community they represent. Police departments in particular should hire individuals with diverse backgrounds and encourage hiring within the jurisdictions officers will be patrolling.**

An element of police reform that was widely championed among Millennials in all four cities was an increase in the diversity of police officers. Young people made it clear that for police officers to better understand their uniquely intersectional lived experiences, they would need to better understand them. In Baltimore, they noted that only one out of five police officers are Baltimore residents, a mere 21 percent.<sup>33</sup> They felt that individuals who were from Baltimore (or spent significant time there) would be better equipped to interact with them positively, which they cited as extremely important, given that police make contact with young people at higher rates than other age groups.<sup>34</sup>

Experts have pointed out that Baltimore, a majority black city, also had a black mayor, a black police chief, and a black attorney representing the state at trial at the time of Freddie Gray's death.<sup>35</sup> These factors, however, didn't satisfy the predominately black roundtable attendees. They reiterated that understanding the culture of Baltimore was crucial to better police/citizen interactions, noting that 68 percent of Baltimore police officers live outside Baltimore and 10 percent live outside the state.<sup>36</sup>



**Only  
1 out of 5  
Baltimore police  
officers are  
Baltimore residents.**

Diversifying police departments is not just a race issue. It's not just a gender or sexual orientation issue either. Diversifying police departments is about carefully recruiting and retaining individuals from varying backgrounds that can better reflect and connect with everyday people. Recruiting more diverse candidates will assist in this matter, but being even more intentional about where officers are from (and where they live) would take policing to the next level.

Millennials pointed out that races, genders, and nationalities are not monolithic. Therefore, black officers patrolling in a black city doesn't always equate to peaceful and fair interactions. They noted that encounters sometimes go awry when officers cannot relate to their unique surroundings and upbringings. Baltimore itself is a special conundrum of history, neglect, poverty, gentrification, and strained political relationships. Unless an individual is from Baltimore or takes the initiative to educate themselves as to the idiosyncrasies of the city, day-to-day interactions can seem foreign and tense.

Extending the point further, the criminal justice system would benefit even more if its other components were also more diverse and reflective of those who they seek to serve. This would mean improving diversity among prosecutors, juries, and judges. Just honing in on judges, white males are overrepresented on state appellate benches by a margin of nearly two-to-one.<sup>37</sup> This leads to implicit bias issues, and ultimately, unfair sentencing. In order to effectively grapple with these issues, decision makers must prioritize diversifying staff at all levels of the criminal justice system.



**Local police departments should expand their training regimens to include: bias training, de-escalation training, diversity training, and mental health competency.**

All four roundtables cited police training as one of their major asks for reforming local police departments. Young people from Dallas to Phoenix came up with comprehensive suggestions for different ways training regimens could be reformed. One thing was clear, however: Millennials didn't think police training was going to be an easy fix.

In Phoenix, participants had open conversations with several law enforcement representatives. They discussed an upcoming diversity training program that would emphasize teaching, "police about the unique cultural differences between various races and ethnicities in the city."<sup>38</sup> The program is currently being discussed in direct correlation to the deaths of Freddie Gray and Michael

**ROUNDTABLE READOUT:  
Diversifying police departments is not just a race issue. It's not just a gender or sexual orientation issue either. Diversifying police departments is about carefully recruiting and retaining individuals from varying backgrounds that can better reflect and connect with everyday people.**

Brown. It speaks to promoting racial justice and emphasizing the diverse lived experiences of various ethnicities, nationalities, and backgrounds. The Phoenix participants echoed the importance of this new diversity initiative, emphasizing their hope that comprehensive historical demographic information would also be a part of the program.

The Millennials in Phoenix also suggested de-escalation training. They discussed several national examples of police use of force, noting that the police officers involved in the cases of Michael Brown and Tamir Rice were not part of departments with sufficient de-escalation training. According to the *New York Times*, de-escalation training involves teaching officers, “to defuse potentially violent encounters, such as talking and behaving calmly and reasonably with sometimes unreasonable people.”<sup>39</sup> Officers have traditionally been trained in de-escalation but over the last 20 years there has been less emphasis on these techniques.<sup>40</sup> A recent survey of 281 police agencies by the Police Executive Research Forum found that the average young officer received 58 hours of firearms training, 49 hours of defensive tactical training, but only 8 hours of de-escalation training.<sup>41</sup>

In Dallas, young people suggested anti-bias training, pointing out a growing community of individuals who support the measure.<sup>42</sup> Anti-bias training involves critically analyzing stereotypes and cultural assumptions in order to prevent law enforcement officials from treating citizens differently, based on their demographic or appearance.<sup>43</sup> Millennials identified stereotypes and racial profiling as reasons why minorities have negative encounters with the police. Bias training is supposed to curb situations such as this with a national bias trainer noting, “we point out that policing based on stereotypes and biases might also make you unsafe if you don’t frisk the white woman, if you’re not vigilant against the man in the BMW.”<sup>44</sup> The trainings are interactive and include group work, role playing, and time for discussion.<sup>45</sup> The officers are asked to imagine themselves in various positions to help them understand



## LGBTQ ACTIVISTS IN PHOENIX ARE FIGHTING FOR PROGRAMS SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THEIR COMMUNITY

### KARYNA JARAMILLO

*Arcoiris Liberation Team and Arizona Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project*

The criminal justice system, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s migratory detention centers, often place transgender people in solitary confinement, citing no other way to ensure the safety of transgender inmates. In detention for two weeks and solitary confinement for two days, Karyna Jaramillo considered suicide. “I was very isolated in the detention center,” she says. “They told me it was for my own security, but it wasn’t because I was very lonely and I fell into depression.” Now living in Phoenix, Ariz., Jaramillo lives at the intersection of queer and immigrant experiences, and so does her work.

how their impressions are influenced by factors other than the behavior of the suspect.<sup>46</sup>

Millennials in Dallas and Phoenix also discussed mental health training. Police interactions with individuals who have mental health issues was a tremendous part of the discussion regarding police training. Participants agreed that police departments need expert training on how to better deal with those who have mental health issues. These trainings will have to be specific and intentional to help curb the growing number of individuals with mental health issues who are incarcerated.<sup>47</sup>

The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing largely agreed with the participant's suggestions.<sup>48</sup> Discussing law enforcement training and education, the task force recommended basic recruitment and in-service training in conjunction with leadership development in, "community policing and problem-solving principles, interpersonal and communication skills, bias awareness, scenario-based situational decision making, crisis intervention, procedural justice and impartial policing, trauma and victim services, mental health issues, analytical research and technology, and languages and cultural responsiveness."<sup>49</sup>

In reference to a listening session on training and education, the final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing said: "the need for understanding, tolerance, and sensitivity to African Americans, Latinos, recent immigrants, Muslims, and the LGBTQ community was discussed at length... with witnesses giving examples of unacceptable behavior in law enforcement's dealings with all of these groups."<sup>50</sup> The report continues, noting that members of the listening session, "also discussed the need to move towards practices that respect all members of the community equally and away from policing tactics that can unintentionally lead to excessive enforcement against minorities."<sup>51</sup>

## 8

**Police departments should provide residents with transparent processes for reporting and challenging police misconduct.**

Many of the activities brought up by the Columbia Police Department (CPD) at the Columbia roundtable are excellent examples of transparency strengthening the effectiveness of the police force. If participants in the Columbia roundtable wanted to find out what the Columbia Police Department had been up to prior to the event, they could have attended the

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Policing based on stereotypes and biases might also make you unsafe if you don't frisk the white woman, if you're not vigilant against the man in the BMW.

”

Public Command Staff Meeting (PCSM) on September 23, 2015. Every other week the CPD hosts this meeting as an open forum for community members to hear directly from officers and department leadership. The meeting featured approximately 20 attendees, residents, and press, and reviewed the recent crime rates for each district within the city.

In addition to this standing meeting, the CPD recently released an Internal Affairs report (2014), which highlighted their process when investigating complaints of officer misconduct, use of force incidents, and vehicle pursuits.<sup>52</sup> As explained by the CPD, “[The] report gives a complete overview of [their] internal affairs activities along with supporting data and information” in efforts to, “demonstrate transparency, improve performance, and increase accountability.”<sup>53</sup>

Participants in Columbia were interested to hear more about the standing meeting and the Internal Affairs report. Many of them were unfamiliar, so it was a great opportunity for them to hear about all the proactive work in which the CPD has invested. Some Millennials suggested that the daytime PCSM be moved to after school/work hours, enabling more people to attend. They were grateful to hear about the Internal Affairs report and especially interested by Columbia’s low number of police misconduct cases. However, many of them didn’t think the report was reflective of their everyday lives and day-to-day encounters with the police.

Young people told personal stories where they or close family/friends had been mistreated by CPD police officers. They made it clear that some of CPD’s mechanisms were progressive but did not do enough to discourage and/or punish officer misconduct. They wanted the 12 police officers present to know that they had been mistreated by the police and their experiences were not reflected in the Internal Affairs report.

While imperfect, the Columbia example is an effective template from which other cities should learn. The CPD has made a concerted effort to create transparent processes for reporting and challenging misconduct, and ensuring that the community is informed on police activity and how the department operates.

As police departments in other cities consider this recommendation, it is important to note the complexity involved in creating legally sound transparent reporting processes. A comprehensive reporting system must take into account the complexities presented by open cases, the sensitivity

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**While imperfect, the Columbia example is an effective template from which other cities should learn. The CPD has made a concerted effort to create transparent processes for reporting and challenging misconduct, and ensuring that the community is informed on police activity and how the department operates.**

of private information, when the information is to be released and by whom, and how long information must be retained. These items each require comprehensive research and investigating in order to achieve a system that functions fairly and effectively.

## 9 **Police departments should provide safe spaces for officers to report wrongdoing observed of other officers.**

The police officials who participated in the roundtables communicated that police departments are not always safe spaces for officers to report wrongdoing, alluding to the “blue wall of silence,” an unwritten code where police officers claim ignorance when asked about the wrongdoing of another officer.<sup>54</sup> This led to discussions surrounding the internal politics of police departments.

Millennials agreed that internal barriers to the successful prosecution of police misconduct present a huge problem in need of addressing. Bad police culture is a real concept that permeates police departments around the country. While mechanisms for police officers to report police misconduct exist, a number of the officers in Phoenix and Dallas communicated that this type of behavior is widely discouraged. For police reform to be successful, departments will have to modify their policies to promote reporting of misconduct within their departments and implement severe consequences for officers that do not comply. Additionally, departments will need to determine how to overcome the barriers presented by police unions, which often come to the defense of officers who are facing scrutiny for wrongdoing.

## 10 **Police departments should implement community policing initiatives that encourage police officers to build relationships with community members and residents.**



### **REPORTING IS KEY TO REBUILDING TRUST IN DALLAS**

## **LELANI RUSSELL**

*Black Lives Matter activist*

Lelani Russell is many things: a college student, an activist, and a mother. She’s also a victim of police brutality. She has lost any sense of trust for police. “I guess that if there were more protections for them if they come out and speak, and more resources for them to come out and speak, maybe there will be a change. Maybe we can say that there are some good ones out there,” she says. In the meantime, Russell has committed herself to meeting the basic needs of the community. As a co-founder of the Dallas non-profit Helping Hands Healing Hearts, that means doing just about anything—from monthly food and clothing drives to haircuts for homeless and low-income people—to help people.

Community policing initiatives were a big part of the discussion in Columbia, SC. Community policing requires that police and the community collaborate to identify and solve community problems.<sup>55</sup> With the city's police chief and deputy police chief in attendance, the conversation in Columbia was honest, robust, and relevant. To promote community policing initiatives that emphasize communication and transparency between the police and the community, the CPD has implemented rigorous and consistent tactics. The CPD states that they require, "new recruits to spend a week volunteering, often working at homeless shelters, children's hospitals, or soup kitchens. The goal is to convey the importance of service to the community at the beginning of their training, their most impressionable time."<sup>56</sup>

Deputy Police Chief Melron Kelly stated: "We want our police officers to understand that they are public servants who serve as guardians rather than warriors."<sup>57</sup> His department actively engages the community by hosting open forums every other week. At these gatherings, community members have an opportunity to hear the CPD's reports and ask them questions directly. They serve as an opportunity for the department and the community to have open and honest conversations.

In addition to their training and open forums, the CPD provides low-cost loans to officers who wish to live in Columbia in an effort to immerse their officers in the communities they patrol.<sup>58</sup> The CPD explains that, "the residential officer program is designed to allow officers to become members of the communities they serve."<sup>59</sup> "When you live next to Columbia citizens, go to the grocery stores with them, you get to know them — if you encounter a combative situation with a city resident you can then address it with a level of compassion for your fellow city resident," stated Deputy Police Chief Kelly.<sup>60</sup>

Columbia is not alone in implementing community policing strategies. Since 1994, the federal government has invested over \$14 billion in police



## BALTIMORE POLICE MUST WORK TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

### DEJUAN PATTERSON

*Community Organizer*

While in college, DeJuan Patterson started his first youth outreach program, and in doing so started to see over and over again the factors and the patterns leading and triggering youth violence and aggression. "We are over-criminalizing the youth inside Baltimore," Patterson says. "And that compels and reinforces other people to treat the youth as criminals. Instinctively. Before they even conduct the act." So far, Patterson's group, the BMore Family Group, has hosted events to build community through dinners, voter registration drives, toy drives and art exhibits, with a special focus on youth development.

forces that practice community policing. However, this has been met with mixed success, with unfortunate negative examples in cities like Cleveland and Baltimore — cities with community policing policies that have still had issues with police use of force. In order to create effective community policing strategies, cities must have conversations with their constituents about what community policing means, and build programs that reflect the outcomes of these dialogues.<sup>61</sup> If other cities do this, they will be more likely to achieve the level of success that Columbia has enjoyed.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Over a three-month time span, Generation Progress connected in-person with over 200 people committed to criminal justice reform. Millennials showed up and communicated their passion and commitment to improving the lives of young people by driving systemic, long-term change. From Columbia to Baltimore, Dallas to Phoenix, relationships were created, partnerships were solidified, and resources were shared. An infrastructure was created for young people to share ideas, develop solutions, and lead the way on criminal justice reform.

Through thoughtful discussion, research, and collaboration, Millennials came together to shape the recommendations discussed above. They were developed to give young people a foundation when advocating for criminal justice reform because although Phoenix and Dallas are very different cities, their criminal justice concerns are very similar.

The young people Generation Progress met are fighting for a future where young people, especially young people of color, need not fear being gunned down by police officers. They are fighting for a future free of gun violence. They are fighting for a future where young people of color are not systematically channeled into the school-to-prison pipeline. They are fighting for a future where young people have access to quality education and mentoring programs to ensure their success. Hopefully, in the near future, these fights will yield results and Bruce Franks' closing rap line won't ring so true:

“People ask me what the problem is? Put yourself in my position, no matter what, I always fit the description.”

“

We want our police officers to understand that they are public servants who serve as guardians rather than warriors.

”

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# Appendix: Overview of Participating Cities

Between September and December of 2015, Generation Progress hosted Millennial criminal justice roundtable discussions in: Columbia, S.C.; Baltimore, Md.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and Dallas, Texas. The goal of these discussions was to develop a set of Millennial recommendations on criminal justice reform. Each city was chosen based on its unique demographics and diversity of perspective on criminal justice issues. An organizing committee of local leaders within the criminal justice reform movement compiled the invitation list for each roundtable. Attendees included local, state, and national activists, organizers, policy experts, law enforcement agents, elected officials, academics, entrepreneurs, and formerly incarcerated individuals.

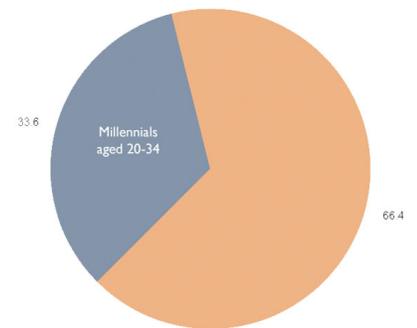
## Columbia, S.C.

On September 24, 2015, Generation Progress hosted its first Millennial criminal justice roundtable in Columbia, SC. Columbia's population is approximately 132,067.<sup>62</sup> The racial breakdown consists of 51.7 percent white (non-Hispanic), 42.2 percent black, 4.3 percent Latino, 2.2 percent Asian, and 0.3 percent American Indian and/or Alaska Native.<sup>63 64 65 66 67</sup> Millennials aged 20-34 make up approximately 33.6 percent of the population.<sup>68</sup>

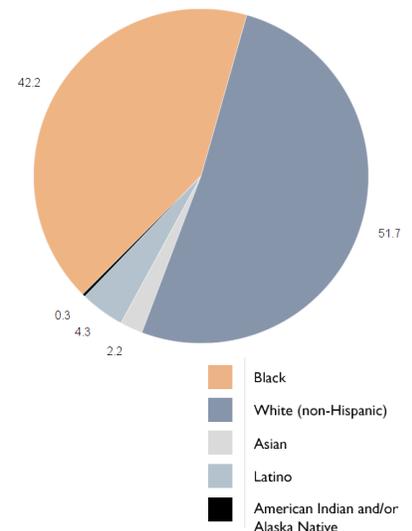
The six-member organizing committee included representatives from Sowing Seeds into the Midlands, the Columbia Talented 10th, Richland County Public Defender's Office, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., and students from two educational institutions. In total, the roundtable attracted over 50 participants, the vast majority of whom were black.

Columbia was a fitting choice for the first roundtable considering the incidents that had catapulted South Carolina to the national spotlight. First, there was the video-taped killing of an unarmed black man, Walter Scott, in nearby Charleston, SC by a white police officer.<sup>69</sup> Second, there was the church shooting of nine unarmed black people by white supremacist and neo-Nazi Dylann Roof.<sup>70</sup> Third, there was the highly politicized process of removing the confederate flag from the SC statehouse led by Bree Newsome, a black activist.<sup>71</sup>

This roundtable was unique in that Generation Progress was invited by the



Columbia's population is approximately **132,067**.



Columbia Police Department (CPD) to host the roundtable in Columbia. In fact, 12 of the 55 participants were members of the CPD and Richland County Sheriff’s Department, and the Police Chief and Deputy Police Chief even made appearances at the event. To kick off the conversation, the event featured a keynote from Columbia’s Mayor, Steve Benjamin, giving participants an opportunity to engage with their elected and non-elected leaders, and directly hold them accountable.

Ultimately, the event was successful because of the unique opportunity participants had to sit across the table from police officers and share their stories, lived experiences, and perceptions in a safe environment. Young people were able to have an outlet for their frustrations, while also having a forum to develop solutions to criminal justice issues. In Columbia, community policing emerged as an important component of policing reform; a theme that was echoed at the three subsequent roundtables.

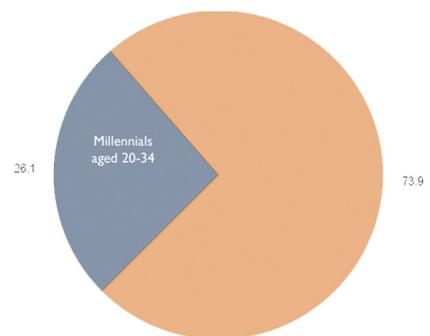
In addition to community policing, solutions discussed in Columbia included ban the box legislation, the incarceration of minors, gang violence, and police brutality.

## Baltimore, Md.

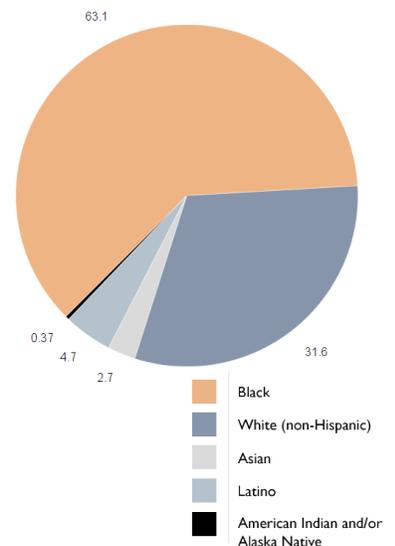
On November 4, 2015, Generation Progress hosted its second Millennial criminal justice roundtable in Baltimore, Md. Baltimore’s population is approximately 622,793.<sup>72</sup> Of that, 31.6 percent is white (non-Hispanic), 63.1 percent is black, 4.7 percent is Latino, 2.7 percent is Asian, and 0.37 percent is American Indian and/or Alaska Native.<sup>73 74 75 76 77</sup> Millennials aged 20-34 make up approximately 26.1 percent of the population.<sup>78</sup>

The three-member organizing committee included representatives from the Jobs Opportunity Task Force, Baltimore Corps, and a University of Baltimore School of Law student. Over 40 people attended the roundtable, the majority of whom were black and with a particularly high number of black youth.

Similar to Columbia, Baltimore’s place at the center of the conversation around criminal justice reform was cemented by the death of Freddie Gray.<sup>79</sup> The Baltimore youth-led protests caught the attention of the entire country as people noticed the anger, passion, and conviction of those fighting for a better future.<sup>80</sup> The national spotlight on a city that had seen its fair share of police misconduct—Baltimore paid \$5.7 million to alleged victims of police brutality



Baltimore’s population is approximately **622,793**.



between 2011 and 2014<sup>81</sup>—sparked a broader conversation on race, law enforcement reform, and community-based solutions.<sup>82</sup>

Electric and nuanced, the roundtable brought together youth leaders, young community members, and representatives from local youth-led organizations to voice their experiences and opinions. A few elected officials and individuals seeking office for the first time attended the event. This provided Millennials with an opportunity to propose reforms directly to elected officials and those seeking office. Generation Progress also invited representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, who declined, citing the close proximity of the highly publicized Freddie Gray trial and the ensuing public scrutiny of their department.

All of the participants made it clear they had good ideas to help move Baltimore forward. Topics specifically mentioned during the conversations included police encounters, reporting incidents of police misconduct and abuse, the presence of police officers in schools, police culture and hiring, the expungement of criminal records, and preventative measures to criminal justice related issues.

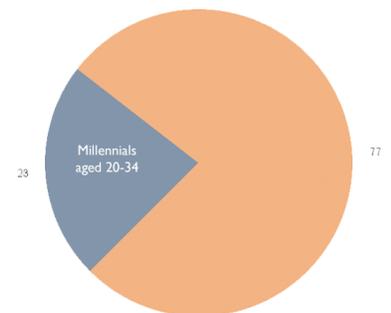
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## Phoenix, Ariz.

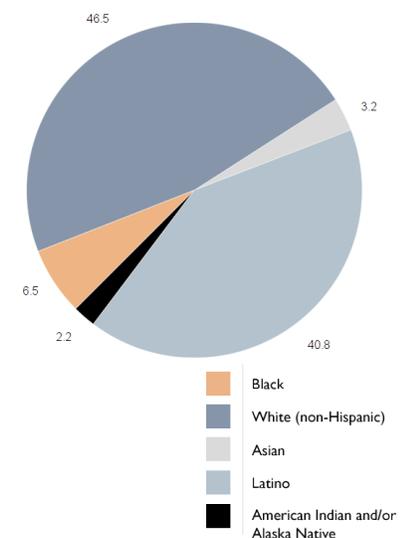
On November 19, 2015, Generation Progress hosted its third Millennial criminal justice roundtable in Phoenix, Ariz. Phoenix’s population is approximately 1,537,058: 46.5 percent is white (non-Hispanic), 6.5 percent is black, 40.8 percent is Latino, 3.2 percent is Asian, and 2.2 percent is American Indian and/or Alaska Native.<sup>83 84 85 86 87 88</sup> In all, Millennials aged 20–34 make up approximately 23 percent of the population.<sup>89</sup>

The seven-member organizing committee included representatives from AZ Black Voters Alliance, the Arizona State University School of Public Affairs, the faith community, Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA), AzQueer Undocumented Immigrant Project, Center for Neighborhood Leadership, and the Arizona House of Representatives. In total, the roundtable attracted over 45 attendees, who were majority Latino and black.

Given Arizona’s high Latino immigrant population and hotly contested immigration laws, the intersection between immigration reform and criminal justice reform was a focal point of the discussion. In 2010, Arizona passed S.B. 1070, a law that requires police to determine the immigration status of



Phoenix’s population is approximately **1,537,058**.



someone arrested or detained when there is “reasonable suspicion” they are not in the U.S. legally.<sup>90</sup> Many attendees expressed frustration with this law, which in practice discourages undocumented individuals from calling the police when they are in need, in fear that S.B. 1070 will authorize the police to check their immigration status and ultimately deport them and/or place them in a migratory detention facility.

Activists who attended the roundtable shared their “One PHX ID” campaign, calling for a city-sponsored multifunction identification card system. After Phoenix City Councilwoman Kate Gallego delivered keynote remarks and heard from the young leaders in the room, she announced her support of the initiative.<sup>91</sup>

Beyond immigration-related criminal justice issues, topics of discussion included police reform, investments in education as a proactive solution to the broken criminal justice system, cultural sensitivity and competency training, the militarization of the police, police recruitment efforts, and addressing gang violence in tribal reservations by focusing on root causes of violence.

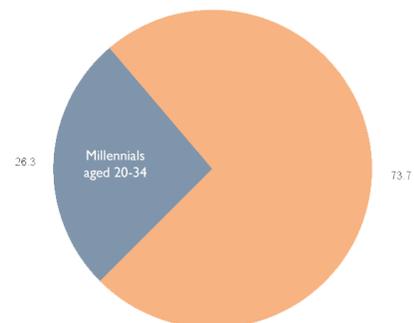
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## Dallas, Texas

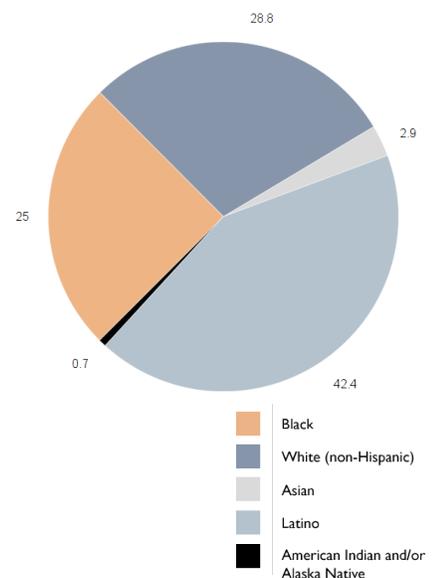
Generation Progress hosted its fourth and final Millennial criminal justice roundtable in Dallas, Texas on December 2, 2015. Dallas’ population is approximately 1,281,047.<sup>92</sup> Of that, 28.8 percent is white (non-Hispanic), 25 percent is black, 42.4 percent is Latino, 2.9 percent is Asian, and 0.7 percent is American Indian and/or Alaska Native.<sup>93 94 95 96 97</sup> Millennials aged 20-34 make up approximately 26.3 percent of the population.<sup>98</sup>

The four-member organizing committee included representatives from: Next Generation Action Network, Dallas Faces Race, the Texas Organizing Project, and OBI Law Firm PLLC. Over 60 individuals attended the event, most of whom were black.

Like many American cities, Dallas has an unfortunate history of discrimination on the basis of race. This dates back to the first decade of the city’s existence, when in 1860, a drugstore was burned down and officials presumptively accused and punished slaves and abolitionists.<sup>99</sup> More recently, 15-year-old Dajerria Becton was slammed to the ground by a police officer while attending a pool party in nearby McKinney, Texas in June of 2015.<sup>100</sup> Her attorney, Hannah Stroud, attended and spoke at the roundtable.



Dallas’ population is approximately **1,281,047**.



Several senior-level officials from the Dallas Police Association, Dallas' largest police union, attended the event. One official expressed that he believes most of his officers do not see race and therefore enforce the law without bias. These comments were met with opposition from a number of attendees, who argued that if the police do not see and understand race, it will be difficult to make progress in preventing racial bias and racially driven police misconduct.

In addition to the criminal justice issues directly related to race, attendees also called for addressing the school-to-prison pipeline, improving transparency of police reports, improving mechanisms for reporting police misconduct, and dedicating resources to diversionary programs.

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