

TRANSCRIPT

"SCHOOL DISCIPLINE BOOK LAUNCH WITH DAN LOSEN AND MARSHA WEISSMAN"

A Conversation With Dan Losen and Marsha Weissman
Moderator: Allison Brown

ANNOUNCER:

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ALLISON BROWN:

Welcome. Welcome to Open Society Foundations. And welcome to this book launch. My name is Alison Brown. I am the program officer for the racial justice portfolio here at the Open Society Foundation. We're gonna get-- jump right in. Really, really excited about this.

Just so you know format, we're going to hear from our au-- authors first. They're gonna give a few minutes of remarks. And then we'll open it up to question and answer from you all. I'm so glad to see all of your faces here. We're-- really, really thrilled.

As you all know, there has been tremendous amount momentum around school discipline and school discipline reform-- really focusing on the disparities in school discipline that we see-- especially racial disparities in school discipline-- and exclusion of children of color from the mainstream classroom. And that momentum has really generated movement from the federal government, from philanthropy from a variety of different stakeholders.

And-- is thanks in large part to the two people you see sitting in front of you. I will introduce Dan Losen and my colleague, Laurie Basaller (PH) will introduce Marsha

Weissman. And then we'll let them get into their remarks. And then let you ask questions. So Dan is the author of *Closing The School Discipline Gap, Equitable Remedies For Excessive Exclusion*. Just a funny story about-- about Dan. So I am philanthropy now. But I'm-- a Civil Rights attorney by training.

And-- one of my first classes in Civil Rights and education and the intersection between education and the law-- was taught by Dan Losen-- (CHUCKLE) when the Civil Rights Project was at Harvard Law School. So he is my professor and friend.

And he and his data and research and activism have been incredibly important to the movement, to the moment that we see right now-- to the advocates and others that utilize his data and his research to actually make a difference in-- in classrooms for children of all kinds. And he is so important to this work. And I'm really excited for his work, for his new book and excited that he's here with us today. And with that, I will turn over to Laurie to introduce Marsha.

LAURIE BASALLER:

Thank you all for coming. And-- and we really need to think Allison for hosting this event. And also Eric, her colleague here, for making us all happy with food and drink and microphones and things. And Andrew back in the D.C. office who-- worked tirelessly to get this thing together.

Also, two people who aren't here-- Kavitha Mediratta and Tasha Tucker from Atlantic Philanthropies who are also co-hosting and-- responsible for making things happen. So-- just introducing Marsha Weissman is-- is a unique pleasure for me.

Because I am, in addition to being at the Edward Hazen Foundation, a proud former board member for the Center for Community Alternatives-- which she has been the executive director of for over 30 years now. You know, when you-- people get up to introduce people, they often say, "They have worked tirelessly their entire careers." And you start to nod off. And it s-- feels like a cliché. But I really couldn't think of any other way to start an introduction for Marsha.

Because she has. As I said, she's been leading this organization for over 30 years. She's also been an organizer and an advocate around criminal justice issues for, shall we say, a couple years before that. We won't put numbers on it. And the work that she does is particularly unique. And-- and that I find particularly compelling because it connects the actual experiences of doing the work and providing services and having interventions on the ground with people affected with incarceration and the public policy that drives those people to be imprisoned.

And so, you know, they-- at Center for Community Alternatives, they piloted some important programs that have now become, you know, quite-- a part of the way we think of criminal justice work, like alternatives to incarceration work. And-- but they were one of the early organizations to get involved in doing that and saying people don't need to be imprisoned, we should be dealing with these things in communities.

But then they also connect that up to policy work. So they also wrote one of the first reports, actually the first I know of, on the financial consequences of incarceration. And some of their new work is on the consequences of having college applications ask about-- involvement with the criminal justice system.

Which is basically the college version of ban your box, ban the box. So-- you know, the other thing also to say about Marsha is that she's cl-- the classic lead from behind kind of personality. And having her on stage, she's a little uncomfortable with that I know. (CHUCKLE) But therefore it's no surprise to me that her book, *Prelude to Prison*, is the voices of young people who are caught up in the school-to-prison pipeline.

And that is a unique contribution. It affirms them as individuals with real experiences that are critically important. And it also-- I think brings something into our lives that we wouldn't have seen otherwise. So I'm very happy to be able to introduce her tonight. Thank you.

MARSHA WEISSMAN:

Thank you, Laurie.

DAN LOSEN:

So thank you for all coming here. It's really a great honor. I wanna think-- the Open Society Foundation for putting this event together. And-- Allison, it's a privilege to have been your-- professor and to-- just to-- you-- you're ama-- you've done amazing work in this area.

And it-- it's the kinda thing that-- just makes, you know-- everyone just feel proud and excited when, you know, law school produces-- well, you produced yourself. (CHUCKLE) But when law school contributes to your development in that way. And it's just-- it's just amazing.

So I wanna think also Atlantic Philanthropies. And I should mention that, you know, I'm the editor of this book. This book is a real collaborative effort in the truest sense of the word. Tanya Colk (PH) and Kabitha Mediratta were pivotal in not just bringing people together, but their voices, their input, their expertise informed the process from A to Z.

And I know Kabitha's not here. But Tanya's here so I wanna shout out to-- to her. And Michelle is also-- was part of the-- the collaborative-- one of the collaborative members. And now, are there any others that I'm missing that are in the room today?

But it was-- the-- it's really important to note that this-- really-- it epitomizes what-- can happen when people are working together. So really feel-- fortunate to have worked with, for example, Russ Skiba, who-- was one of the leaders of the-- the

Disparities in Discipline Collaborative-- in School Discipline Collaborative and bringing everyone together.

And-- and it was-- influenced by another member, Pedro Noguera (?). You may have know-- know him, who was one of the ones who recommended that, you know, we receive some of the funding to put this book together. I also wanna make sure, since this is being recorded, that-- you know, Sherry Hodson (PH)-- who is a student getting her Ph.D. at-- UCLA and-- was-- really responsible for shepherding through-- a lot of the nitty gritty that went into the-- into the responses with the-- with the co-authors and just putting the whole book together-- as well as a co-author of one of the chapters. I wanna thank-- Tia Martinez and Chafty Belway (PH) and Joy Eth (PH), the co-authors as well. And Alfredo Aritez (PH) and Elizabeth Cozlesky (PH), who are the ones who approached me and said, "We wanna do a book on school discipline as well as some other-- projects that-- I hope to now be able to revisit.

And they are-- and they are listed as-- as-- series editors. So-- and-- and so it's really important to recognize their work. And they've produced several-- books that address inequity in education and-- so they're a powerful voice. And-- and, you know, harnessing Teacher's College Press in a way to-- to bring this kinda work-- into the field, to influence policy makers as well as-- leaders and teachers in the classroom. (THROAT CLEARING)

The purpose of this particular book was always to bring-- the research findings to the policy makers. So we wanted to avoid being just an academic publication. And so the-- a lot of the work that I did as editor w-- was working with the authors to make sure that the way they constructed their-- their research and the way they presented their findings would speak, not just to an academic audience, but also to practice makers.

And we know-- part of-- and especially on this topic, but in most topics when we're really up against-- structural racism and-- and when we're really trying to change the-- the-- the whole framework of how we're looking at public education, when it comes to trying to get policy makers to change what they do, you have to not just present evidence of the problem.

You also have to present them with some real practical solutions and evidence that these things work. So I've done work on the Hill. I've worked with advocates who are working to pass state legislation. And was with that audience in mind that-- these chapters sort of came into being. And also it's why some chapters, some excellent works were not included in the book. Because maybe they only spoke to teachers or maybe they only spoke to-- you know, what parents could do or just described a problem, but didn't really have-- a policy solution-- embedded.

And so-- so that-- that's really what this book is all about. And hopefully-- as you read it, you all find that there are pieces in it that you can use. So that in your work as advocates or s-- emerging students who are going into this field, that we're not just-- embellishing on what's on research.

But we are informing the debate in congress at every-- in every state-- legislate--

legislature as well as in s-- with school boards-- and with principals and with teachers. So part of what we had to do is not just demonstrate that there is a problem. We've had to do that and the-- and the urgency around it. But also demonstrate that there's something that could be done. And-- one of the key chapters, for example, on that-- the front end of things-- well, there were several.

There's a chapter by-- Bob Bowfans (PH) and his colleagues that one of the key things-- and you probably heard-- raise your hand if you've heard this in some form or another, that-- suspensions correlate with as much as a doubling of the dropout rate. Has anyone heard that? That's great. Because that was a piece of information that came out of his research in Florida. And we-- we-- presented this research-- in-- before we-- the book came out.

We had a major conference. And then we presented it to members of congress. So we're really trying to get this information circulate-- circulating. And it's really-- encouraging that so many people have heard something along those lines. Because that piece of evidence is rock solid. It's based on a long-- longitudinal analysis of every ninth grader in the State of Florida where they tracked them for six years. So it's-- it's really compelling evidence.

And that-- the fact that, you know, so many people in this room have heard about it is really important. Now, there are other chapters that have gotten less attention that we hope to elevate. For example, there's a chapter that shows th-- again, a national longitudinal study that shows that before there are any signs of delinquency-- students-- elementary students and-- secondary students, before any signs of delinquency, they're being suspended out of school.

In other words, the research by-- in the chapter by Shollenberger (PH) suggests that kicking kids out of school is contributing to their delinquency, not just predicting it. But maybe the thing that is making them delinquent. And you can understand the reasons why. When kids are kicked out, they're disengaged. They're-- they feel alienated. They-- the trust breaks down for all these reasons.

Now, it's not a causal study. But it really-- it-- it helps drive that point home. And then there was another-- piece of research-- by Jeremy Fynn (PH) and Tim Cervos (PH) that looked at-- high security measures, including police. Now, a lot of people have heard about the fact that there-- the Oba-- Obama Administration in the wake of Sandy Hook, said, "We're gonna give--" I think it was \$45, \$50 million for more cops in schools.

And then also he said, "Or perhaps, you can spend the money on counselors." But spending the money on more cops in schools makes no sense whatsoever. And one of the things that this-- paper shows and that we presented to Congress is that it is counterproductive. It's not improving the sense of safety. It's decreasing-- graduation rates. And it's increasing kids who are suspended out of school. So when you add all these har-- you know, the high security measures, it's counterproductive. I don't think that one's gotten as much-- attention as it deserves.

And we need more research like this. And that sorta brings to mind-- we just

released a report. So it's separate from the book-- called, *Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap?* And it has data from every district in the nation. And we rank, ordered. We looked at elementary se-- then secondary. And we rank ordered-- the suspension rates.

And we found that some of the highest districts-- we looked at the highest-- the ten highest districts in the nation. Three of them are in Missouri, in St. Louis, in Normandy, River View Gardens. Michael Brown went to school in Normandy. And there, 50% of the students across the board were suspended out of school at least once in 2011, '12. And there was an increase from 2009, '10. Kids with disabilities in Normandy and River View Gardens in-- St. Louis, 70, 80% at the secondary level suspended out of school.

This is just outrageous. And this really-- I think dovetails with the recent Department of Justice analysis which-- where they were finding it's not just that there was this one incident that-- is extremely problematic on so many levels. But the whole way the city government-- was operating was not serving the community, but was trying to generate revenue for Ferguson. And it was just the antithesis of what good government is all about.

And-- and so connected to the legacy of Jim Crow and segregation that I believe that the kinds of data that we're seeing and-- is really-- it-- it-- it suggests that sh-- there are school districts that operating like the City of Ferguson is operating, where there's no real interest in educating the kids. They're just there to work and do whatever they need to do to maybe raise test scores. But it's not about education.

There's-- there's some really-- and so one of the things that the report does th-- is really highlight the fact that there are just outrageous things going on in our public schools. It's-- it's not-- just about implicit bias. There's explicit bias. There's incredible effects from structural racism. And these are also supported throughout the-- the book chapters as well.

There are book chapters that zero in on the experiences, for example, of Black girls. So Jemula (PH) Blake and her colleagues wrote a chapter that was really compelling. Looked at the differences in the way Black girls are treated, compared to White girls. But also showing-- and our recent report (COUGH) show that Black girls are often the second highest group suspended. So usually, you know, there's that, "Oh, boys will be boys." And for bad reasons, people somehow accept the fact that boys-- tend to be suspended at twice the rates as girls.

But Black girls are being suspended at higher rates than any other males of any other racial group. And so there's something there that we-- and so Jemula Blake's-- and-- and her colleagues started to drill down. And that's presented in-- in the book. It's-- beginning of research that we really need-- to-- to pursue mo-- in more detail.

Our chapter on students with disabilities not only found huge racial disparities among kids with disabilities. And sug-- but it also suggests that certain disability categories are much more likely to yield suspe-- kids being suspended out of school. And guess what the most frequent one is, 33% of kids with emotional disturbance--

33%, one out of three. That's K through 12 nationally, suspended out of school. That suggests that there's something-- that we are suspended kids because of their disability that is blatantly against federal law and the Constitution.

It's against the Equal Protection Clause. And this is going on in school after school after school. Instead of provided for the needs of kids with emotional disturbance-- now, guess what? It's also true that Black students are much more likely than White students to be over-identified in that category.

So there's a confluence. There are relationships here that this book just starts-- to-- to dig into that we need to continue to-- to not just research, but then bring that research to light of policy makers. So that we can-- reject the status quo. And that's really-- again, going back to, you know, this book is to serve the interest of convincing policy makers. It's not just-- it's not good enough to describe the p-- the problem. So one of the pivotal chapters is by Russ Skiba and his colleagues, where they show that what is the leading predictor of high suspension rates, it is the attitudes of the principal.

So that's after controlling for race, after controlling for poverty. It is the attitudes of principals that are driving high suspension rates. And in addition, it's the attitudes of principals that drives up the racial disparities. So it's not just high suspensions. But the racial disparities that are predicted by the attitudes of principals.

So the ones that have the sort of zero-tolerance mentality, blame the kids, blame the c-- parents, "We gotta kick out the bad kids so the good kids can learn," they're not only suspended a lot more kids, they are much more likely to be running schools where Black kids and Latino kids-- other kids of color are suspended in-- in disparate amounts. And that, to me, is also very powerful when you come to policy makers. 'Cause it says schools can do things differently.

So I worked really hard to-- with all the researchers-- to get them off this sort of dime-- saying, "Well, you know, our findings are not conclusive. They're not generalizable to--" you know, et cetera, et cetera. 'Cause researchers-- always-- have a million caveats about why you can't, you know, draw too many conclusions or you shouldn't shape policy.

And I say, "No, no, no. There is no policy. There's no research behind zero-tolerance. There's no research to suggest that suspended a lotta kids is good policy." But we're doing it. And we need to take what we have and say to policy makers, you know, we have strong evidence that this is counterproductive. It may not be a causal relationship. But we have enough for you to start re-thinking your policies and practices. And the good news is that this is actually startin' to happen.

So the council state governments in-- July just released-- their report, which brought researchers and advocates and principals and police chiefs and judges together. And everyone agreed that schools are suspending too many kids, that suspension-- we have to get back to suspended kids as a measure of last resort. And that racial disparities are a problem.

So the good news is that in the response to the book, as well as-- our latest research--

the report findings that we just-- released, we're hearing a lot of superintendents saying, "Yeah, we need to do things differently." So we are starting to turn the corner. But we're not there yet. Still, the fact remains that that federal government does not collect and report discipline data every year. And it's not disaggregated either. It's every other year. And this is a critical-- critically important piece of information. Community groups need this information.

But it's-- you know, the data only goes so far. So in addition to data, we also need-- to have the support for what works. We have to use the data-- we have to use the data to show wasn't isn't working. But also to show the alternatives. And so that's where-- I think the most powerful chapters in this book are actually-- they're-- they're a few of them.

One is written-- by Talia Gonzalez (PH), which is a six-year study of restorative practices in Denver. Now, for years we've been hearing that restorative practices are a good idea-- a lot of qualitative reports that this works for kids. But what this showed is in Denver, where they started with a pilot program and over the course of six years, came a systemic approach to-- to school-- discipline policy and-- and-- and trying to create-- a more healthy climate for kids in general, that during this period, they reduced the racial gap.

They didn't eliminate it. There's still a lot of work to be done in Denver. But the Black suspension rate from-- went from about 17% of all Black student K through 12, to 10%. The White rate also went down. But-- but not as much. So the-- and Latinos also went down more than Whites, but not as much. So they closed the racial gap. They didn't close it, they narrowed it.

And they also dramatically reduced the use of out of school suspension. And during that six-year period, for every racial group, for every subject-- at every grade level, Denver showed improving on their test scores. And that's the kinda evidence that gets policy makers to wake up and say, "Yes, there is a more effective way." And our report, for example, shows that they're actually more low suspending schools and-- and districts that high suspending. So it's not the norm. Right around the corner, right within the same district, Los Angeles has the same number of what we called high suspending s-- secondary school where over 25% of-- w-- any racial group was suspended.

And low suspending was where every group was below ten percent. And there were more low s-- there were actually equal number low and high suspending schools. That was in a study in '09, '10. But approved-- and then we-- we replicated that. In fact, we found nationally there are more in both elementary and secondary level, more low suspending schools than high suspending, at either level.

So there are-- it's not just an academic study here or there. There's more to found out about what's working. There are lots of schools and-- and districts that are much more effective than places like-- you know, Normandy, Missouri or St. Louis, Missouri. So in addition to that, we need the stories. Policy ma-- and that's why, you know, the work that Marsha's doing and others are doing, putting that human face is

really important.

And-- you won't convince policy makers with just data or academic studies alone. You need those stories. They use those when they talk about this issues on-- whether it's a state legislator-- legislator or-- fed-- you know, someone like Bobby Scott. They need those stories to really convince their-- their colleagues and to make a change.

But we need the data. And then the last-- I'll end with this. So the researchers, always when-- as a editor, they're always trying to say-- their conclusion is we need more research. (CHUCKLE) We need to study the problem. And-- in our book, we-- we sorta shy away from that. Because this is for policy makers. And that's not gonna really grab them. So we have a whole set of recommendations for policy makers. And we focus on that in the book.

However, I wanna leave all of you with this-- strong-- plea for more support for research, as well as for-- you know, the data and-- and the support and legislation. We need to have the kind of research that is in this book. We need to replicate it. We need to do-- you know, find more districts where restorative practices-- you know, at the state level, they're not gonna listen to what happened in Denver if you're in Missouri or Mississippi or Alabama.

We need to find success stories and promote that and put those side to side with some of these worse districts in the nation. And so I think I-- I-- I'll-- I'll leave you with that, that-- it-- it-- the research is really critically important. And so thank you very much. And I hope you enjoy the book. (APPLAUSE)

DAN LOSEN:

Hi, everyone. It's-- a real pleasure to be here. Thanks, Laurie, for that-- really lovely introduction. And thank you-- the Hazen Foundation for organizing this. Thank Allison and OSF for supporting this. And of course, Atlantic Philanthropies and there in some wonderful place, doing some wonderful stuff.

Before I get into sort of the thrust of my book, which I think is really good-- companion to-- what Dan's book is and what he spoke about. There are some folks in the room who came and-- to support me. And I wanna thank you very much. I see two board members, Carol Eddie (PH) and Sheila Rule.

I don't think I'm missing anyone else. And CCA is an incredibly mission-driven organization. And-- we couldn't be that without the support of our board. I also see some colleagues in the room from what we call the ATI Re-entry Coalition. And those are folks that I've worked with who I worked with for many years-- around reducing incarceration in New York State.

And last, but certainly not least-- I really wanna thank-- I see colleagues from the Dignity in Schools Campaign. And I have learned so much-- in the relatively short years, shorter than the ATI Coalition-- from-- from the Dignity in Schools Coalition about the importance of putting directly impacted people, young people and their

parents in the forefront of the struggle to end-- both incarceration policies and school discipline policies.

And it's really helped me-- do this book, even though I've been, quote, "a practitioner for many years--" and created this organization, The Center for Community Alternatives that works to reduce incarceration-- my heart has always been in research. And then there's a long, ridiculous story about me burning my first dissertation in 1975. You can talk to me over wine (CHUCKLE) maybe about that. And-- but I always wanted to finish. And so this is actually my dissertation after my kids grew up. And my grandchildren aren't ready to go to college. So have a moment before I, you know, have to look at them and support them.

And it really is he-- it-- it helped me-- take a step back and think about the work that we do. And I say that collectively. Because I think a lot of us in the room are doing variations of this work. Actually from-- beginning from a theoretical perspective, but looking at how young people themselves could-- could really live out and show us that theoretical perspective.

And while it's probably way too wonky to share with policy makers, I think it's really important for folks who do the work occasionally to step-- take a step back and think about what systems are we embroiled in that put us in this place. And for me, I look at the school-to-prison pipeline issue as intimately connected to mass criminalization in the United States. And mass criminalization to be fundamentally a social justice issue or human rights issue and a Civil Rights issue.

And it's no accident-- and by that I don't mean people sit in a room and conspire overtly. But it's no accident that schools have become the latest victim to be sucked into criminalization. And to some extent-- it pu-- it-- it reflects-- the-- some of the dilemmas that school-- that have always faced public schooling in the United States.

And what really helped frame my understanding of what the children were telling me is something called Social Reproduction Theory. And essentially a lot of that focus at one point in time in the role of schools to socialize, if you will, children from the working class into stepping into their parent's shoes. So it was a mechanism to sustain current social structure, economic structure. But when you look at sort of post-industrial America, and yes there you go, you can't use with policy makers.

That word wouldn't resonate. (CHUCKLE) But really, when you look at post-industrial America, right, when jobs have disappeared, right? And you combine that with the relentless oppression of communities of color, it does help to explain the sc-- school-to-prison pipeline. And the transformation of poor urban schools, not into places that are preparing kids for industrial jobs.

But rather, preparing them to enter prison. And I think even if we never say these words to policy makers, those of us who are doing this work, really have to know where it comes from in order to push back again what we're gonna face, right, as we-- sort of-- get some victories, right? But they're very fragile victories. And they're fragile victories because of-- the essential role that-- that race and class plays in the United States. And so I want to sort of walk folks through to the voices of young

people-- and how they experience school-to-prison pipeline.

And I'm gonna start. I'm gonna do about four vignettes that are pretty short. And I'm gonna start with Jada (PH)-- and all the names are pseudonyms. And Jada-- accompanied me and several other young people-- as part of the U.S. Human Rights delegation-- in I think 2006, 2008-- to testify in Geneva, Switzerland-- on-- U.S. compliance with the-- Treaty to End Racism in All Forms.

And this was her testimony to-- that committee. "I would like to tell you what is it like to be sent to an alternative school. You always feel judged. Teachers don't give you the benefit of the doubt. Out of the 70 students who actually attended school every day, I remember only seeing one White boy. At my regular school, about 60% of the students are White. Mid-year, I was put into a program called Three to Five. Which means I went to school for two hours a day."

"I fell behind in my school work. I was only taught math once a week. The teacher was there every day. And didn't really teach us. She only gave us dittos and worksheets. I'm in the 10th grade. But I have to take 9th grade classes. I felt like I was in jail when I was in the alternative school. Sometimes I had to be checked three times a day and checked before I went into certain classrooms."

"It's very uncomfortable being searched because I really don't like to be touched by other people, especially people I don't know very well. It's more uncomfortable for girls because sometimes they check you around your most private areas. and it's just uncomfortable. I feel like the alternative school system has set up kids like me to fail. You go back to school so far behind that you just wanna drop out of school. I would like to end by saying that we need to look at why kids like me are suspended and if at all get rid of alternative schools."

And that really captures all of the things that I heard from young people-- who I interviewed. The other interesting thing-- that belies the myth is how-- children understand their own behaviors. And contrary to what you often hear when you're trying to reform school policies, all the kids I interviewed took ownership of their own misbehavior.

But much like the criminal justice system, they were desperate to have people understand the context of their behavior. And much like the criminal justice system, they thought they were over-charged. And they wanted desperately, an adult to hear sort of what we-- that-- we who work in the criminal justice system, understand as mitigation. And so here is what Roland told me-- about his bad decision, right?

"Well, it was an incident on the bus where my little brother, well, he brought a knife to school. And him and another student got into a disagreement, which turned into a physical fight. He, my little brother, pulled out the knife. And he attempted to s-- stab the other student. So I broke up the fight. And tried to take the knife away from my little brother. And the knife was in my possession which, I guess, they literally had no choice to send me to the alternative school because it was in my possession," right?

So there's a young person who understands-- the school rules. He understood zero

tolerance. But he didn't understand zero tolerance. Because nobody listened to him about how this came about, right? Here's the other thing that we often forget when we hear-- when we suspend kids out of school, what else they worry about that gets attached to their suspension. And so this is-- Janella (PH). And she was really worried because she was getting suspended or she was suspended.

And she says, "I be stressin' a lot about that. I'm tryin' to do good. But, like, I'm stressing. I worry about my family more than school. And it just takes me off track. And I worry about my mom. Because I wanna make sure my mom is happy and my sister's happy. Because I know she's depressed. And I'm worried about getting suspended because I think that the White CPS (Child Protective Services) is gonna get into our business and take me away."

"And I'm not trying to leave my mom for nobody." And that's also why she doesn't talk to people in school, some of whom might well be very supportive. But because her family experience and home life experience has been that when you go to an authoritative person, it doesn't wind up like you think, that something worse tends to happen. Here's an example of what one young woman-- experienced when-- she was-- stopped for her misbehavior, right? She had a pass. The officer didn't believe she had a pass.

She was taken to the office. She asked to call her dad, right? And she was on the phone with her father. And then the principal, "He's 6'2", "now I'm reading, "200 pounds or something. He's a big dude. And he comes in and he yells in the phone and tells my dad to get off the phone and stop calling. And then hangs up on my dad. Then they put me in handcuffs because I was throwing a fit because they hung up on my dad."

"They actually had the police officer come in and put me on the ground and handcuff me. But then after he had me-- on the ground, the principal came in and sat on my back. And it made me cry even worse." And again, not all suspensions put-- you know, play out that way. But it surely wasn't the only story that I heard that played out that way. The other thing that prepares kids who are in the school-to-prison pipeline who are going to these hearings for-- becoming in the-- involved in the criminal justice system is the hearing process itself.

And I'll tell you, this completely freaked me out because it was so much like the-- the defendants we work with, the-- so much like their stories. And so here is what a young girl named Tanza (PH) told me. "The hearing was crazy. I was scared because I had never been to a hearing before. They closed the door. And they got you speaking on this mic. And they were talking like you were in jail or something."

"Because this lady, she got this big old thing. It's like a confession that you see on TV. They have a confession tape. They have one of them. And I was like, 'Oh, my God,'" right? Another story about the hearing very quickly. "It's just like court. You go in there. The hearing is just like court. Pretty much you go in there. They overrule you. And you they just give you your time." And how does this impact kids? What do they take away from it?

So they go into an alternative school. And this is how the alternative school was described by one young man. "They're actually setting kids up to go to jail and stuff. Because basically you have no rights. Especially when you get to the alternative school. Because they make you take off your shoes and everything when you come through the metal detector. They don't just tell you to go through the metal detector. They wind you down."

"You gotta take off your sneakers. Then if they think you got something, they make you take off your socks. And all the other stuff. And that's-- just like going to jail. Once you're in there, you're in there and there ain't no way out." The psychological toll is something that literally left me crying often times after I finished (NOISE) the interviews with kids. And here's what Roland told me. And Roland is the young man who took the knife from his brother.

"My suspension hearing was horrible because of the things that they were saying. I thought in my mind that the things were saying, they were anybody trying to make me look, you know, bad. I thought in my mind they were trying to make me look like a bad kid. They were actually trying to make look like I was a nobody. And I was so mad at that, the hearing, because, you know, I thought they literally tried to make me look bad for real. And it was horrible."

"They were all talking about how I don't go to school. But I do. They were talking about how I don't go to class. But I am in class every day. I don't do my work. I do. They were just tryin' to make me look like I was all together bad. That I was literally a nobody. And that hurted me." And the last section that I'm going to read from-- you know, I did ask all the kids if they-- they sort of knew what the term, school-to-prison pipeline meant. And for all of us that are so embedded to that-- in that term, didn't mean anything. (CHUCKLE)

They-- hadn't heard it, right? So then I asked them to try to sort of guess what it might mean. And there were lots of good g-- guesses, but-- one definition or description by Ray Kwon (PH) was-- really blew me away. And for those of you who aren't familiar with the work of Bruce Western, a local (UNINTEL)-- I mean, he sounded like them to me, right? So this is what Ray Kwon said.

"Yeah, like, school stiff, they're looking forward to you going to jail or messing up your life and being nothing. It's just the fact. It's like they don't wanna teach us no more. It's like America itself. They just wanna see people locked up just for the fact of it. People can't maintain themselves. So they put them in a cage. Because they just wanna see us. Again, the whole thing about how they end up in jail or prison. When they come out, you might as well they still inside."

"Because half of them are now on probation or parole and they got somebody watching them. Or if they're not on probation, they can't do much. Like, if you're not on probation, like, if you're coming home from prison, you can't vote. Then as soon as you get outta jail or prison, you gotta have a job in a certain amount of time or they're taking you back or whatever."

"So once you come home, you really don't have too much rights. So you really may as

well say you still there, a slave." I do wanna end with one optimistic statement, right? (CHUCKLE) And we see that every day in the work that we do, right? And it is I think a companion piece to-- Dan's optimism about seeing some changes in sort of policy around those issues. But the changes in policies are not to-- really, at the end of the day, to like Dan's work, as fabulous it is or our work.

It's really due to the young people and the parents themselves that take up this issue. And I saw it firsthand in the group of kids that were got to take to the UN convening. And Jada, who opened this story, at the end of the trip she looked at me. And there's a lot more I could say that she said during the trip. But she looked at me and said one thing that I think we have to hold dear to our hearts. And she said, "We're all activists now. And that's how it's gonna change. These kids tell 'ya that." Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

ALLISON BROWN:

So we'll take questions now. Are there questions or comments?

JESSIE:

Thank you very much. My name is Jessie. And I'm the executive director of Global Youth Connect. We run programs around the world. And we run a human rights in the U.S. program. I also have a connection to schools because my brother is a principal of-- both a founding principal of the James Baldwin School in New York, a small school.

And has since moved to Vermont. My question is on-- his behalf-- which is about any data related to small schools and whether it makes much effect to have a smaller school where the principal has, say, fewer students to take care of and to care about-- if that's-- a factor in any of the research-- or anything that you've been studying. Thank you.

DAN LOSEN:

So (THROAT CLEARING) we-- we could look at that. The pr-- it's sort of a double-edged sword. Because the smaller the school, then the less reliable the data are because we're looking at things like suspension rates. And if they're only, say, ten Black kids in the school, each one counts for ten percent.

So it-- it becomes more volatile. But that's something we could-- we-- we could certainly look into that-- to see whether after you've controlled for that-- problem, whether sch-- small schools tend to suspend fewer kids or not. We do know that charter schools, which are varying in their size-- do h-- tend to sort of parallel-- the suspension rates that we see in traditional public schools. So we have sort of the polar extremes. We have a lot of charter schools that are suspending kids right and

left. But we also have charter schools that are suspending very few kids. You wanna say anything on that one?

MARSHA WEISSMAN:

I don't have-- data on small versus big schools. I can tell you in-- in my book, in the chapter-- that-- quotes kids-- about what school work-- what works for them-- two or one, they all told about ho-- being able to have a personal connection with an adult or several adults in a school.

And one of the things that they liked about the-- the alternative school and the alterna-- I should have explained this, is a school that kids get sent to-- if they've been suspended for a year, right? And to call it a school is really to take liberties with-- with-- what we all think about is a school.

But one thing they did like was small classes, right? Now, the classes were small because kids didn't go. But on any given day, right, the school actually was overcrowded in terms of all the kids that were pushed in as the year went on. But on any given day, the classes were small. And the kids really did like that.

DAN LOSEN:

I-- I should add one thing. And I see someone else has another question so I'll be brief. A common theme throughout the research on what does work-- and I only talked about Denver. But a common theme, including-- the chapter about Chicago was when you-- schools that invested in teacher-student and teach-parent engagement, those schools had higher achievement-- had l-- lower racial disparities.

And tended t-- even when you were looking at in Chi-- in the Chicago chapter, for example, even schools serving kids from the highest crime neighborhoods, they had the-- the best safety ratings and the lower use of out school suspensions. So these things go hand in hand.

Now, if you had a small school but the teacher-student ratio is really large, you know, that may not-- it might not-- translate. But the-- the idea that in a smaller school, they'll be more contact with parents and teachers and sort of more-- student engagement and-- and better relationships and-- and building that sort of war-- warmer kind of climate, I think it's easier to do in a smaller school.

But not-- it's not-- necessarily a prerequisite. I think the key is that engagement between-- students and the teachers. That-- that seemed to be a common theme. And there was another chapter by Anne Gregory, where they look-- where teachers were trained in en-- improving student-teacher engagement. And they eliminated the racial disparities and dramatically reduced out of school suspensions.

UNIDENTIFIED:

I'm in education for few-- 54 years. Why so long? Because I go-- I graduate from university. I have my Ph.D. and advanced doctorate degree in correspondent course. So I work in (UNINTEL) time. Most of my career I was in post-graduate education. But in America, I know always what this mean to teach kids.

Most profound experience and impression, what I have, from educational experience, it was a speech by principal of school in Afghanistan during ITS Foundation meeting. Girls walking' ten miles every single day to attend their school. They sit in (UNINTEL) floor because Taliban would shoot, even they have guards, through the window. Girls not supposed to study.

Once brought here, the girls, to America, they over-perform every Americans with whom they met. What motivates them to study like this? That's still open question for me. In country where I from and what excuse to certain degrees that I'm going to speak not very politically correct. After revolution, 80%-- more than 80% were illiterate.

In ten years, country become most educated country in the world. It was very strict (UNINTEL). I remember myself, as a kid, no excuses for any deviation. Now Russia has democracy. Nobody, God forbid, (UNINTEL PHRASE) or punish. Parents would defend kids, not cooperate with teacher.

And education, a total catastrophe on all level. In America, most delicate question. But I did not originate this question. Chinese kid (UNINTEL) parents. They don't know English. They came from poverty, totally (UNINTEL). And they over-perform everybody. They (UNINTEL PHRASE)

And the racism, you know-- White racists afraid of Asian. Because Asian would always over-perform in science, in technology and art. So I appreciate your work. You did a lot of job. But there are many really controversial question. And practically we'll never attend discussion about education in America. I never hear answer to this question. America spent on education, almost half of money what whole world spent. There's all complain about money. That's more than everybody else. And results-- thank you.

DAN LOSEN:

I'm not exactly how-- I'm not sure-- I'm not sure exactly what the question was.

ALLISON BROWN:

I think it was a comment.

DAN LOSEN:

Yeah, so--

ALLISON BROWN:

On America's position.

DAN LOSEN:

But I-- I-- I would say that it's important to look at the research about what works. And what works in the context of American education.

ALLISON BROWN:

Mic please.

DAN LOSEN:

And it's also important--

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

DAN LOSEN:

It's important to look at what works in terms of research on American schools and what doesn't work and to stop what doesn't work to do what does work. So it's very simple in that-- you know-- I-- I really don't know about the-- the-- the-- so the international piece of this.

But we know that kicking kids out right and left is not effective. That it leads to-- it's-- and it's also very expensive. So it leads to higher dropout rates. We tend in America, I don't know about other countries-- but I know about other countries.

In America, we incarcerate a higher percentage of our population than any other country. And part of the reason is that we're kicking kids out of school right and left for minor offenses, when we don't need to. I was a teacher for ten years. I can tell you from my personal experience. I was inexperienced. I was sending kids to the principal's office right and left. Fortunately I had a good principal. She said, "Dan, you have a classroom management problem." And I said, "You're right. Can you help me?" (CHUCKLE)

And I got help. I got training. There was support. By my last year, I s-- sent no student to the principal. In fact, we started a school without a principal. And we had

very high achievement scores. So keeping kids in-- kids are out of school, they're not learning. And the data show that there are very, very effective ways to educate kids without kicking them, without excluding them.

And then there's a whole legacy of racism and Jim Crow in this country that don't exist in-- in every other country. They have other legacies. And-- but in America, we have-- we've-- had a long standing policy of-- especially for Black students, of-- a caste system. You know, after slavery ended with Jim Crow-- and also-- intentional-- and then-- informed-- less conscious forms of racism. And we're f-- experiencing the legacy of that.

So the-- the denial of educational opportunity-- is obvious. The evidence supports it. And when you stop denying educational opportunity, students do take advantage. They do s-- they are successful. And there's no question that the status quo is broken and counterproductive and it hurts us all. So-- you know, that's-- hope that-- it's an indirect response. Other--

ALLISON BROWN:

Casey?

CASEY:

Question. Hi, my name is Casey. Thank you both. (THROAT CLEARING) So I'm-- tryin' to formulate this as I ask. And so, Daniel, you mentioned earlier about-- engaging with policy makers. And I think the research that you and-- and Russell Skiba and other researchers have done have been tremendously helpful in shifting policy makers around school discipline. I wonder if those conversations have begun to lead to policy makers acknowledging some of the intersection of their other policies that perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline?

And so for instance, the-- the over-reliance on-- on testing and the kind of oppressive nature that that creates for both students and teachers in a school-- the lack of regulation of public schools and this kind of de-districting. I don't know how-- how-- what you would call it, of-- of school districts, especially urban school districts where students are not traveling outside of their communities.

Many, you know, far away to go to school. And I think of a story that happened in Detroit, where a young woman, by all accounts, was an honor school student. And Detroit has a system where she was actually attending school in Dearborn, which was all the way across town, a suburb outside of Detroit. And her grandfather had given her a small pocket knife because the traveling was particularly dangerous for her. And n-- the-- the night, at times, she was out.

They found a pocket knife at the school. She was expelled in her senior year for the year. And that-- you know, there's really a convergence of policies that are kind of intersecting on our schools. And I-- I wonder if policy makers have started to engage

and acknowledge the other policies they s-- supporting, specifically our department of education. Which has, I think, really supported-- you know, the need to change school discipline policies. But then support other policies that are also kind of perpetuating and maintaining the kind of environment that leads to push out.

ALLISON BROWN:

Now, before you answer-- after Casey's question, I saw Don's hand. So I see one, two, three, four, five. So we'll take those five questions all at once-- six? (CHUCKLE) Seven. Seven questions all at once.

DAN LOSEN:

Okay. So the d--

ALLISON BROWN:

Well, maybe we'll break them up. We'll do three and then four.

DAN LOSEN:

And that last question had, like, ten parts to it. So-- (CHUCKLE) but I'll try to answer at least some of them. And-- and-- one of the things I think it's important to note is that accountability system currently is focused on test scores.

But it wasn't just because No Child Left Behind. About half the states have high stakes-- exit exams for-- for earning a diploma in high school. And these do have-- you know, have been demonstrated to have a disparate impact on kids of color partly because of the resource in-- inequalities. Kids r being tested on curriculum that they haven't-- been taught. Poor minority kids are much more likely to be taught by out-of-field, uncertified, inexperienced teachers. So there's-- there's a whole piece-- about resource inequality that is-- that is also-- clearly entangled in-- in what we're seeing with regard to the-- the high rates of suspension.

And the latest thing that I think I'm most concerned about is evaluating teachers and teacher performance and whether-- teachers maintain their jobs on their before-- before and after test scores of their students. So there's some incentives that are where I think even some well-meaning educators haven't thought about the-- the unintended consequences.

Which is to push out the low achievers, especially where there's no other kinda accountabilities. So one of the-- the main policy-- pieces that we're using the research to inform and-- and push forward is to broaden accountability, not to do away with accountability. But-- to make accountability more holistic, to look at-- the

school climate, to look at graduation rates, rates of grade retention, other things that really matter in terms of life outcomes of students.

And so I think it's important to have that sort of balance, rather than just looking at, you know, reading scores and-- in math and re-- and-- scores in math and reading. And then with-- now it's-- it's an interesting thing. I've worked on desegregation remedies in Hartford, Connecticut. The Civil Rights Project is one of the leaders in-- in studying and analyzing the patterns.

And we are actually in a period where schools are more segregated today than they were-- in the late '60s. So a lot of those programs-- there isn't-- actually a great deal of cross-district integration. And I think we actually need more of that. There are concerns, of course, where-- maybe a mostly White district will, because of implicit and maybe explicit bias, will push those kids down. And we have seen examples even within magnet schools where kids are trapped.

The Black kids are trapped in-- even in a magnet school to the low tracks. And so it's like-- you-- you open the school house doors and it's a segregated school within that school. So those are concerns. But you can't address those concerns where you have racial isolation. And our data suggests that you have much higher suspension rates.

And also a propensity to hire these sort of really harsh disciplinarians only in these racially and socio-- socioeconomically isolate school districts. That's where we see the Joe Clarks of the world. You would not hire a person like that in-- in-- sort of the well-integrated suburb in Boston. Marsha you want--

MARSHA WEISSMAN:

And-- yeah. The-- the only thing I-- I would add to that, again, is sort of the human face. What's high achieving and low achieving? And example, so the young people that we work with who are pushed out of school-- are presumed to really have to talent for much of anything.

And-- there was a poetry contest-- a number of years back. And part of the work that we did with kids w-- was offer them-- you know, poetry writing opportunities. And we entered their poems into this county-wide contest. And our kids-- they-- they awarded-- 16 awards throughout the county, many school districts, many schools. Our kids won four of the awards. So a lot of what achievement it is, is about how you teach kids, what you teach kids, what the curriculum is, how you engage them. And how you make them feel, it means something to their lives.

UNIDENTIFIED:

Okay. Sorry. Thank you both. I'm so anxious to read both books. First, Dan-- I wanted to ask you, does your book address-- how sometimes children with depression or emotional disruptions are labeled especially. And does-- the book also-- address the stigmatization of kids in special ed?

And Marsha, I wanted to ask you, is there any policy work underway as far as you know that addresses maybe return-- some of the kids that are doing better in the alternative schools to return them back to their regular schools earlier than a year?

ALLISON BROWN:

Let's take the-- the next three questions. So that-- that question and the next two in the-- in the order. Don-- Don was next. Let me get Don. And then-- and then you'll be number three. And then we'll start with you the next round, okay?

DON:

I wanted to first comment on the international question. But I will end in a question, I-- I promise. Commentary, most countries use the systems that they have available as forms of social control for the populations that they don't want. In this country, it happens to be LGBTQ kids, immigrant kids, kids who don't speak English, kids of color, go down the list, right?

Think of Europe, Roma kids, they classify half of them as kids with disabilities, put them in shitty schools and don't educate them, okay? That's the trend around the world. It's different dynamics everywhere. But that's what happens. That's why we're in the fight against the government monopoly on state violence in different forms, okay?

That's-- that's what this is about. That's-- part of the international trend. The question, Dan, to you-- clearly I'm drawn to the provocative, as are you. That's why we think alike. You made a comparison to Ferguson. And I thought that was really interesting. I wanted to ask you to tease that out. You talked about how schools are similar to the way that the city government in Ferguson operated. I don't know if you meant in the way that the government there has been characterized as operating as a business on the backs of low-income communities of color. And you made the comparison to high stakes testing. I wanted to ask you to tease that out. That's my question.

ALLISON BROWN:

Thank you. And then number three?

PATRICK MANSLIGHTMAN:

My name is Patrick Manslightman (PH). I am the-- the director of education at New York City Probation. I wanna thank you for the work that you're doing because it helps me when I meet with DOE, right, which is always a major issue. We live in a

city where there's supposedly lots of progressives, right?

There's a progressive mayor. There's a pr-- education folks. But when we remove our kids from one school to get them into a different school, which is hopefully a better school for them, dismissals, suspensions, follow them. My question to you is what would be a good way to engage DOE, to engage the principals.

Because what I have found is that having a different teacher, someone who understand the kids in a different way, makes a significant difference in how they react to that kid. And I have noticed over the years, that you meet with different principals. One can understand and willing to engage in restorative practices. And the other one would look at you as though you have six heads.

ALLISON BROWN:

So-- I heard four questions. So-- (CHUCKLE) to-- to Dan about special education, Marsha about returning students to school-- Dan about your Ferguson implications and to the both of you about kind of engaging educators. And I'm gonna ask that you keep your responses brief. 'Cause I really wanna give folks time to get their books signed. And we have to be out of this room by 8:00. So--

DAN LOSEN:

So one of the things-- we have a chapter in the book on-- that I-- I was one of the authors on, that looked at-- these sort of overlapping concerns with-- over-identification of especially Black and Black males and suspension rates. And one of the curious things-- so one-- if you just looked at the data empirically, you definitely see a disproportion.

So among kids with disabilities, they all tend to be suspended about twice the rate as their non-disabled peers. But Black students with disabilities tend to be suspended about twice the rate of White students with disabilities. But then when you break it down by disability category, which we did in our study, we found that it was predi-- the schools that tended to-- to s-- identify more kids as emotionally disturbed also s-- tended to suspend high rates of students. And interestingly, the schools that tended to have higher rates of kids identified as autism-- this held true for-- both these cases held true for both Black and White students, they tended to suspend lower number of kids.

So there-- there's more to unpack there than we were able to do with our-- the-- the limited data we had available. But there is a suggestion that the category and a stigma. And as I pointed out earlier in my comments, you know, Black kids are much more likely to be identified in the stigmatizing categories of emotional dis-- have-- having an emotional disturbance, being mentally retarded or now it's called-- intellectual disability.

(UNIDENTIFIED: UNINTEL)

DAN LOSEN:

And also in the catchall of specific learning disabilities. Excuse me?

UNIDENTIFIED:

I'm sorry, does that include ADHD?

DAN LOSEN:

No, it doesn't. ADHD usually falls within this otherwise health impaired category. And-- but for the most stigmatizing category, that is also the one that you would expect, if you have emotional disturbance, that you would need a behavioral improvement plan, that you would need behavioral supports.

And because the law says you can't suspend a student because of their disability, it's the most obvious that kids are being suspended because of their disability. They are being suspended because they have emotional disturbance. And that's blatantly unlawful, whether they're White or Black.

But the disproportionality is that more Blacks are identified as emotionally disturbed compared to Whites. They're over-identified in that category. And the category where we tend not to suspend kids, the beautiful genius category of autism-- and a lot of autistic kids have all kinds of behavioral issues, there's very low suspension rates for kids with autism.

So they're getting-- in some categories, they seem to be getting-- and the ones that Whites are over-identified in, autism, they tend to get more supports and-- it's a different approach to their addressing their be-- misbehavior. So there's more to-- to look at. And I-- and this is a topic that I've been actually analyzing. We have a whole book on racial-- inequity in special education.

So it's not just the identification. And it's not just the discipline. There's also another concern with the placement in the school. So are you in the mainstream setting, part of the regular classroom and only brought out for part of the day? Or are you mostly in a separate setting? And it-- you know, surprise, surprise, even with-- within each category, Black students are much more likely than White students to be removed from the mainstream.

So there's a segregation effect within special education. There are policies that-- you know, we were able to help draft and get implemented into law. But they're not being-- they're not being enforced. So that's-- I'll-- I'll switch to-- so I don't monopolize the--

MARSHA WEISSMAN:

So I'm just gonna say a quick thing-- about--

(ALLISON BROWN: UNINTEL)

MARSHA WEISSMAN:

A-- a quick thing about-- sort of the labeling. Because it's really starting to disturb me. I think we have to be very cautious about what we're labeling-- the over-labeling and the labeling of kids. And it's, you know, sort of the-- the way that we're tryin' to make the-- the justice system more-- attentive to needs, labeling kids as emotionally disturbed with other mental health problems. A lot of the kids that we deal with, they're not (CHUCKLE) emotionally disturbed. They've been victims of trauma, right?

DAN LOSEN:

That's right.

MARSHA WEISSMAN:

And if you read the book, there's examples in there of kids who act out. And when you talk to them-- you know, when you spend time interviewing them and talking to them, somewhere in their story, they'll tell you, you know, about their brother being killed.

Or they'll show you the wound on their head or the wound in their shoulder. And-- we're pathologizing kids. And I'm not saying that there aren't real mental health needs among lots of folks, lots of kids, whatever, you know, racial characteristic. But that's sort of our new way of-- sort of not really grappling with the fact that we're criminalizing normative adolescent behavior for poor kids and kids of color. So get off that. With respect with sort of Carol's and your question about-- you know, helping kids re-engage in school.

One of the things we've seen, and we have done some actual quantitative look at this that the re-suspension rate for kids who've been suspended once-- is very high, right? It sort of cements the-- you know, the label on their head, right? From the programmatic perspective, one of the things that we did-- we had a DOE-- a federal DOE grant-- in the early 2000s.

And we evaluated it, that by-- when kids were returning from-- alternative school-- and again, I talk about it in my book. It really looks a lot like re-entry, right? For those of us who work in the criminal justice system. All the reasons, all the barriers, right, all the things that you faced before you were put in prison, are exacerbated

after you've come back out. And that's the same thing for kids who are transitioning back into mainstream school.

And they talk about it in eerily similar fashion. But one of the things that we've implemented as a programmatic response is something we call a transitional coach or a transitional advocate. And that's both to help kids re-acclimate into school. But actually more to really try to get teachers and principals to give these kids a real second chance.

I mean, maybe they shouldn't have been pushed out in the first place. But there we all right. But not to immediately (SNAP) push them back out. Because I'll tell you something, and there's-- stuff in the book that these kids come back. And the adults in the school say, "What are you doin' back here? I don't want you back here. Oh, Mike Tyson-- little Mike Tyson is back," right? So having an adult support that's there particularly in-- the initial months of transition really helps re-engage kids.

ALLISON BROWN:

So Dan, Ferguson in 30 seconds or less.

DAN LOSEN:

Yeah, so-- (CHUCKLE) that's a big question, too. So there's a lot to unpack there.

ALLISON BROWN:

Turn your mic, please.

DAN LOSEN:

I think part of what-- oh. Part of what we're seeing in places like Fer-- Ferguson is that it's the antithesis (PH) of preparing folks for a democracy. And-- and that might be intentional. Or it may be a reflection of structural racism where-- you know-- Blacks were never supposed to be part of the dem-- our democracy.

You know, be-- after slavery, there was a resistance-- Jim Crow and so forth. And-- and so the idea that the-- the school districts and the school authorities are exercising in control in a way that says, "We're gonna-- we want obedience. We're gonna teach obedience. And anyone who can't follow and be obedient in this very con-- you know, concise way, you're out. You don't get education."

"We-- and we have really no interest-- in educated folks to be-- vibrant parts of our community. We just want you to obey the rules." And so I think when you're seeing 50% of-- of Black enrollment being suspended out of school, I think that-- that is part of what is going on. And so that's also reflected in the way-- Ferguson is running

their municipality.

That the-- instead of serving a community-- they're looking at the-- the Black members of that community as-- second-class. It's sort of the plantation mentality that, you know, you serve our purposes or we don't-- that's-- that's-- that's what-- what it's all about. And so-- so that's my 30-second response. (CHUCKLE)

ALLISON BROWN:

Marsha, do you wanna talk about engaging educators, question about engaging educators?

MARSHA WEISSMAN:

Yeah. I mean, some of it, I took that question to be addressing the re-entry issue. I know that from the work that we're doing in Syracuse--
(ALLISON BROWN: UNINTEL)

MARSHA WEISSMAN:

That's a really-- oh, sorry. From the work that we've been doing in Syracuse and Dan did some great data analysis that, you know, sort of help move the dialogue forward. But at the end of the day it really is about confronting explicit and implicit racism.

The-- the-- the staffing patterns in school, the culture that has been allowed to sort of fester that-- doesn't connect with kids. And so the engagement of educators is going to be a long protected-- struggle with I think lots of-- victims-- along the way. And that those of us who work on this issue, it-- it cannot be enough to celebrate getting a good coat, right?

It really has to be figuring out ways of supporting the champions in each community, right? So it's very labor intensive-- who are gonna be brave and lead this change and support this change so that it happens. And engaging educators, you need to sort of elevate educators who get it, you know, and it-- it-- you know, I mean, we just did that last week.

Thank you, very much-- with the superintendent in Syracuse who's under incredible horrific attack, right? Teacher Unite-- that's-- you know, a wonderful DSC member does it with-- with their colleagues. So we need to figure out how to do that. And again, parents and young people have to be front and center. Because they're the ones who are gonna say, "Look at me. I am a human being. I deserve to be educated. I want to be educated. And I want you to be my teacher."

DAN LOSEN:

So and-- I'm gonna-- the engagement piece, right?

ALLISON BROWN:

Very-- very briefly.

DAN LOSEN:

Yeah, yeah. (CHUCKLE) So I think where we are experiencing--

UNIDENTIFIED:

Four more questions.

DAN LOSEN:

--a paradigm shift that's really important-- so rather than-- you know, it's true. The status quo is true that students sometimes go to these alternative settings or get a fresh start after they've been kicked out of school, that might be better.

They may not wanna return to the original high school. They may find themselves in-- in a situation where a new teacher, they're starting over and they're--they're getting-- the kinda support they need. But more often, the problem is, is that-- that-- that's just the exception. And the rule is that that's just a path, you know, the alternative placement.

That's just another part of the path to prison. And what we have to have is a paradigm shift so that all teachers, all leaders are trained beginning with higher ed. But also re-training of the teachers of their-- and I have-- you know, I k-- I was a teacher. My parents are educators. I believe that this really works. And that most people go into (COUGH) teaching or wanna be school leaders, wanna do what-- what works.

And when you show them that it really does work, whether it's restorative practices or other kinds of interventions and teacher training, it's really very-- it-- it-- it's positively reinforcing. So you feel better about yourself as a principal or as a teacher when you're not kicking kids out of school right and left. And the kids are successful and the kids that you didn't f-- expect to be able to succeed is actually-- you know, defying your expectations.

And those examples are-- are when you have-- some sort of commitment. And so I think we're seeing that kind of sea change. Principals confronted with their data said we have to-- they're rejecting the status quo. You know, even throughout--

Mississippi-- or no, Missouri, in response to our report, they issued a letter to all the s-- the superintendents saying, "You have to re-- re-examine your practices and your policies around school discipline."

So that wouldn't have happened ten years ago. They would've said, "This is BS. We gotta kick out the bad kids." Today, we're seeing prin-- principals like Sharon and many others start to embrace this, reject the status quo, figure out what works. And when they do that, it really is more effective. And so the answers are-- are really there.

ALLISON BROWN:

So unfortunately-- and I know I see you, one, two, three. I see you. I know. And I'm really sorry. (CHUCKLE) But unfortunately we have to wrap now. Marsha and Dan will be here. They can answer your questions directly, one on one. (APPLAUSE) Please join me in thanking them both.

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *