PIPELINE
by
DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU

REGIONAL PREMIERE DRAMA
SEPTEMBER 22 - OCTOBER 16, 2021

ENSEMBLE THEATRE
CINCINNATI
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Dear Teachers & Staff,

It has been 19 months since ETC celebrated opening night of the regional premiere of this incredible play. In that time, a light has been focused on the inequities highlighted in Dominique Morisseau’s play, *Pipeline*. This guide is intended to encourage personal connection, spark the social imagination, and engage your students and you in conversation that, hopefully, will extend beyond your experience of attending the performance. This play provides the opportunity to consider our roles, as students, parents, and teachers, in advocating for education that is responsive to the needs of students and authentically works towards forming a more just society.

Posing the question of what can we do as a community to promote equity, address implicit bias, move beyond assumptions, and see the whole person beyond what they appear? We hope that you and your students will see in Ms. Morisseau’s provocative work an opportunity for dialogue and action.

*Pipeline* tells the story of Nya Joseph, a dedicated, inner-city public high school teacher who is committed to her students’ achievement, while she sends her only son, Omari, to a private boarding school. When Omari is involved in a controversial incident which threatens him with expulsion from his school, Nya is forced to reconcile Omari’s rage, her own parental decisions, and the public and private school systems, as she rallies to save her son.

Recognizing that tough conversations like this one can be difficult, we hope that this production and guide offer a path towards honest and open discussions with those directly impacted by the school system. Encourage your students to begin a conversation and build understanding of polarizing perspectives.

Lauren Carr
Director of Education, Engagement & Inclusion
SYNOPSIS
Nya, a public school teacher at an overcrowded and underfunded city high school, writes the words of Gwendolyn Brooks’s 1959 poem “We Real Cool” on the board for her students. What was once her favorite lesson plan has become an anxiety trip as the poem now has a face: that of her seventeen-year-old son Omari. Nya believed that she had saved him from the school-to-prison pipeline when she and her ex-husband Xavier sent Omari to a majority white boarding school upstate. However, when she gets a call from the school informing her that Omari got into a fight with his English teacher during class, she worries that Brooks’ prophecy of doomed youth is about to come true.

Omari has tunnel vision and the only way he can see himself surviving this incident is by running away from a school that threatens to crush him under the weight of representation. He feels tokenized by his teachers and his peers as a Black student from the inner-city who “got out” when all Omari wants is to be a regular teenager. He is angry and lost and he thinks, maybe, he can be free from the suffocation of the prep school if he just runs. Of course, his girlfriend Jasmine would never tell Nya of her son’s plans, even when she comes knocking on her dorm room door, demanding answers.

Whether at Nya’s indigent public school or in the spotless hallways of Omari’s boarding school, the American education system is failing. However, as the school board debates pressing charges against Omari, they see the situation as quite black and white. Nya is trying to do her best to raise a young Black man in 2017, begging Omari, “tell me how to save you,” to the rhythmic underscoring of Gwendolyn Brooks’ poetry. “We Real Cool. We/Left school. We/Lurk late. We/Strike straight. We/Sing sin. We/Thin gin. We/Jazz June. We/Die soon.”
—Fiona Selmi

SETTING
“Not necessarily NYC, but definitely modeled after it. Can be any inner-city environment where the public school system is under duress. However, the quick pace of the language is NY-inspired and should be maintained in any setting. Present Day. Also, we have Undefined Space. This is a place where location doesn’t matter. It is sometimes an alternate reality bleeding into reality. It is sometimes just isolated reality that doesn’t require a setting. Only words.”

CHARACTERS
NYA - Black woman, mid-late 30's. Single mother, Public H.S. Teacher. Trying to raise her teenage son on her own with much difficulty. A good teacher inspiring her students in a stressed environment. A struggling parent doing her damnedest. Strong but burning out. Smoker.

OMARI - Black man, late teens. Smart and astute. Rage without release. Tender and honest at this core. Something profoundly sensitive amidst the anger. Wrestling with his identity between private school education and being from a so-called urban community. Nya’s son.


LAURIE - White woman, 50’s. Pistol of a woman. Teaches in Public High School and can hold her own against the tough students and the stressed environment. Doesn’t bite her tongue.

DIRECTOR’S NOTES

When I heard ETC was thinking about Pipeline by Dominique Morisseau, I was hoping I would get the opportunity to come back to Cincinnati and bring it off the page to the stage. It is always an honor working on Dominique’s plays and I have had that honor several times. What better place than ETC to do that? Especially a play that means so much to so many.

Since workshopping the original script with Dominique in Chicago, I have watched this powerful play affect so many young, old, black, white, and brown, in large and small venues. I am truly honored to be back in Cincinnati for this one. Thank you, Lynn and the ETC family. It’s always a pleasure.

-Ron OJ Parson

SOUND TRACK

Sound Design by Matt Callahan

4 Your Eyez Only - J. Cole
Neighbors - J. Cole
This is America - Childish Gambino
Blessings (feat. Jamila Woods) - Chance the Rapper, Jamila Woods
Dis Generation - A Tribe Called Quest
FEAR. - Kendrick Lamar
Spar (feat. 6LACK & Kodak Black) - Dreezy, 6LACK, Kodak Black
Sleep Deprived (with Lute & Omen feat. Mez & DaVionne) - Dreamville, Lute, Omen, Mez, DaVionne
Sacrifices (with EARTHGANG & J. Cole feat. Smino & Saba) - Dreamville, EARTHGANG, J. Cole
Groove Waltz - McCoy Tyner
Super Rich Kids - Frank Ocean, Earl Sweatshirt
Ready or Not - Fugees, Ms. Lauryn Hill, Wyclef Jean, Pras
All The Stars (with SZA) - Kendrick Lamar, SZA
Dirt And Grime - Father’s Children
Appletree - Erykah Badu
I Love You More Than You’ll Ever Know - Donny Hathaway
Wake Up Everybody (feat. Common & Melanie Fiona) - John Legend, The Roots, Common, Melanie Fiona
PLAYWRIGHT’S RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

You are allowed to laugh audibly.

You are allowed to have audible moments of reaction and response.

My work requires a few “um hmms” and “uhn uhnns” should you need to use them. Just maybe in moderation. Only when you really need to vocalize.

This can be church for some of us, and testifying is allowed.

This is also live theatre and the actors need you to engage with them, not distract them or thwart their performance.

Please be an audience member that joins with others and allows a bit of breathing room. Exhale together. Laugh together. Say “amen” should you need to.

This is community. Let’s go.

- Dominique Morisseau
“WE REAL COOL”

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) was an American poet, novelist, and teacher, the first African American author to win the Pulitzer Prize. She served as poetry consultant to the Library of Congress in the 1980s and was Poet Laureate of her home state of Illinois from 1968 until her death. Her work frequently focuses on the personal struggles and celebrations of ordinary people. She remains today one of the most widely read and anthologized American poets. Brooks wrote “We Real Cool” in 1959. It was included in her 1960s poetry collection _The Bean Eaters_ and became her most famous work.

**Essay about “WE REAL COOL” by Tyehimba Jess**

“We Real Cool” is the poem so many of us know from grade school: the Seven (that sacred number of the seeker, the thinker, the mysterious) at the Golden Shovel (the shovel be golden but be ready to dig your grave). Them lounging streetcornerwise in our consciousness under some flickered neon of mannish-boy dream. A Chicago/Detroit/Harlem/St. Louis/L.A./Gary/... corner. Someplace where the rhyme is always as good as the reason, anyplace where the cost of gin is precious enough to thin but solemn enough to pour on the sidewalk for the departed, anyplace where the schools are overcrowded and underfunded and black and brown enough to not really miss the Seven, who were underperforming on the standardized tests and had been diagnosed as ADD or BDD status anyway. Anyplace where sin gets hymned out—straitlaced into storefront chapels on Sunday mornings—but sewn back into Saturday night doo-wopped breakbeats, finger-snapped shuffles of promise.

We know the Seven. Know them like our neighbor’s boy gone bloodied to bullets. Like our cousins nodded off into prison terms or hyped into the ground. Like our brothers gone homeless. Like our fathers gone missing. Like ourselves when we look in the blurry mid-morning mirror. One for every day of the week, one for each of our deadly sins. One waiting around the bend of each American corner. We stand in the June of our lives and try to sing it all the way through each season, always ending each line on the word that brings us together as much as it pivots us into new revelations: We. We. We. We. We. We. We.

https://poets.org/text/tyehimba-jess-we-real-cool-gwendolyn-brooks
NATIVE SON

A novel written by the American author Richard Wright in 1940. It tells the story of 20-year-old Bigger Thomas, a black youth living in utter poverty in a poor area on Chicago’s South Side in the 1930s.

While not apologizing for Bigger's crimes, Wright portrays a systemic causation behind them. Bigger's lawyer, Boris Max, makes the case that there is no escape from this destiny for his client or any other black American since they are the necessary product of the society that formed them and told them since birth who exactly they were supposed to be.

"No American Negro exists", James Baldwin once wrote, "who does not have his private Bigger Thomas living in his skull." Frantz Fanon discusses the feeling in his 1952 essay, L’expérience vécue du noir (The Fact of Blackness). "In the end", writes Fanon, "Bigger Thomas acts. To put an end to his tension, he acts, he responds to the world’s anticipation." The book was a successful and groundbreaking best seller. However, it was alsocriticized by Baldwin and others as ultimately advancing Bigger as a stereotype, not a real character.

INVISIBLE MAN

A novel by Ralph Ellison, published by Random House in 1952. It addresses many of the social and intellectual issues faced by African Americans in the early twentieth century, including black nationalism, the relationship between black identity and Marxism, and the reformist racial policies of Booker T. Washington, as well as issues of individuality and personal identity.

THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Over the past 20 years, the term “school-to-prison pipeline” has been used to describe how harsh school disciplinary policies and law enforcement policies work together to feed young people into the criminal punishment system. Researchers have found that excessive suspensions and expulsions lead to various negative outcomes for students, including dropping out of school—and studies have shown that high school dropouts are more likely to be incarcerated than those who graduate high school. In particular, black students are disproportionately disciplined in school—although statistics show that they do not actually misbehave more than their peers.

This trend can be traced back to the Columbine school shootings in 1999. Since then federal and state laws have instituted zero-tolerance policies that assign “explicit, predetermined punishments to specific violations of school rules, regardless of the situation or context of the behavior.” At the same time, in the streets, the war on drugs has led to more punitive criminal legal responses, such as three strikes and mandatory minimum sentencing.

Police officers in schools play a critical role in this pipeline. In 1975, only one percent of U.S. schools reported having police officers; today, most urban schools have police on site. In New York City, public schools employ more cops than counselors. Many schools also have metal detectors and surveillance cameras under the pretext of keeping students safe.

The presence of police officers in schools often leads to harsher, sometimes brutal treatment of students. According to a 2011 report from the Justice Policy Institute, “when schools have law enforcement on site, students are more likely to be arrested by police instead of discipline being handled by school officials. This leads to more kids being funneled into the juvenile justice system, which is both expensive and associated with a host of negative impacts on youth.”

The realization that zero-tolerance policies in schools have led to criminalization and incarceration for students of color, and especially black students, has prompted calls for restorative justice and other, less punitive discipline practices. Some advocates say that the best way to prevent future incarceration is to invest on the front end in providing excellent educational opportunities for all. The outlook for such investment, however, is bleak. Nationally, since 1990, spending on prisons has increased three times as quickly as spending on education.

This article was written by Richard J. Roberts, Resident Dramaturg at Indiana Repertory Theatre, and published in IRT’s Pipeline study guide.

Jay Wade in ETC’s production of Pipeline. Photo by Ryan Kurtz
SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS EXACERBATE THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR
by Elena Thompson, ACLU legal fellow

Our fight for racial justice doesn’t stop at the figurative “schoolhouse gate.” The school-to-prison pipeline is yet another way that Black and Brown bodies are funneled into negative interactions with law enforcement at a young age, far too often resulting in arrest and the irreparable consequences of getting caught up in the mass incarceration system. Ironically, schools and police have diametrically opposed purposes: one nurtures student growth in a protected environment while the other uses zero tolerance practices to enforce laws. Despite this unbridgeable divide, at least 70% of school districts in Ohio employ School Resource Officers (SROs), which are police whose exclusive patrol is a school building.

“Fundamentally, there is a misunderstanding about why people are opposed to police presence in schools,” says Yousuf Munir, president of Young Activists Coalition, a Cincinnati group pushing for policing reform in Cincinnati Public Schools. “People think it is just because they criminalize, but the truth is that one of the most fundamental flaws of the School Resource Officer program is that it is part of a larger system to keep the mass incarceration system running, and harming students of color is just one cog in that machine. They start by making kids think the police are there to help them, [meanwhile] the lived experiences of people of color tell us that police disproportionately brutalize and scrutinize Black and Brown bodies and protect white bodies.”

Yousuf is absolutely right. Decades of research tell us that law enforcement habitually polices Black communities more severely than white ones, and this remains true in the education setting. Black students are vastly overrepresented in law-enforcement referrals and school-based arrests when compared to any other racial groups. SROs’ implicit biases are one reason for this gap, ultimately leading to the protection of white students and the policing of Black students.

In majority white schools, SROs claim their greatest concerns are external threats to the school. However, in majority Black schools, SROs perceive the biggest threat as the students themselves.

Across Ohio, these overrepresentations are even more stark. Black students in Cincinnati are nearly 5 times more likely to face discipline and law enforcement referrals than their white peers. The same students are between 2-2.5 times more likely to face exclusionary discipline in Columbus. Cleveland students of color are punished 2.25-3 times more. The pattern persists; Black students in Ohio schools are approximately three times more likely to face exclusionary discipline than their white peers. These disparities are further compounded for Black students who are also disabled, LGBTQIA+, or non-native English speakers.
This inequality is more alarming in context: as punishments get increasingly severe and more detrimental to students’ future prospects – progressing from in-school suspensions to expulsions and arrests – the rate at which it disproportionately impacts Black students’ increases.

To be abundantly clear, despite that Black students are more likely to encounter severe discipline at school, they do not misbehave more than white students. They are often punished more severely for less serious and more subjective reasons, like disrespect or loitering. Three decades of zero tolerance policies have led to increased suspension and expulsion for progressively smaller infractions that were never intended to have consequences outside of the classroom. Initially, only a small percentage of behaviors merited SRO intervention; now, the majority of school discipline involves law enforcement participation, either formally or informally (like a verbal reprimand or simple presence). Additionally, many schools require their SROs to undergo implicit bias training because of how frequently they take part in student discipline. However, these trainings have not been associated with decreased bias in SROs. Research indicates that trainings often reinforce racial disparities in exclusionary discipline.

The majority of students report that they do not feel safer in high security environments or when SROs are present. In fact, there is no indication that SROs prevent student crime (in many ways, violent crime increases with SRO presence), only that they increase arrests for minor offenses that can be (and historically have been) handled by school administrators.

Alternative methods of behavior management are possible, and they show promising effects on student development and school safety without the irreparable harm of zero tolerance. Restorative justice practices, which emphasize accountability, harm reparation, and student support services, have been adopted by a number of schools with great success. These solutions are also less expensive; an SRO costs between $75-97K annually, while restorative justice resources are accessible for free and a school psychologist and nurse average $77K and $63K per year, respectively.

Police in schools are a relatively new, and a uniquely American, phenomenon. We have a wealth of examples to guide us into a post-policing era in schools while ensuring the safety of students and staff. Nearly a dozen districts across the country have successfully terminated their use of SROs and surveillance equipment in favor of restorative justice practices.

It’s time for Ohio schools to do the same.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. American Civil Liberties Union defines the School-to-Prison pipeline as “national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.” In the pipeline, students who commit in-school infractions are diverted out of schools and into jails, often because zero-tolerance school policies. Have you seen the effects of the pipeline in your school and community? How do you think American’s schools can combat this pipeline?

2. Dominique Morisseau wrote a list of audience expectations she calls the Playwright’s Rules of Engagement (on page four of this guide.) This list may be different from typical rules you’ve experienced during live performance. Specifically, Morisseau encourages her audience to react verbally to the performance. Why do you think Ms. Morisseau wrote this list, and what does it say about her work as a playwright that she felt it necessary to create this list?

POST-SHOW QUESTIONS

1. How has seeing the play altered student’s feelings about the pipeline concept? How can we find positive ways to challenge the negative expectations of others?

2. Compare and contrast Fernbrook Academy, where Omari and Jasmine attend, with Chadsey High, where Nya teaches. What different kinds of challenges do the students and administration of the two schools face? What similarities in either or both schools do you see in your own school?

3. In the stage directions of Pipeline, playwright Dominique Morisseau describes Jasmine as “in touch with the poetry of her own language.” Consider the role of language in the play. How do all the characters speak differently from each other? (For instance, how does Nya speak differently from Dun? from Laurie? from Omari?) What does the way each character speaks reveal about them? What does the way you speak reveal about you?

4. Gwendolyn Brooks’s poem “We Real Cool” is repeated many times throughout the play, almost like a soundtrack for the play’s emotions and themes. How does the poem serve to highlight the feelings and ideas in the play? Does your life have such a soundtrack? What songs or poems do you listen to or re-read most often? How do they reflect important themes or experiences in your life?

5. The end of Pipeline does not provide a clear picture of what happens to Omari and his mother. What do you think happens after the play ends?

6. Omari writes a list of ways his mother can support him. He includes:

   ONE: Hear me out. 
   FOUR: Know when to keep pushing.
   SEVEN: Show Up. In person.

   TWO: Let me chill sometimes.
   FIVE: Let me have some space.
   EIGHT: Be fair.

   THREE: Know when to back off.
   SIX: Don’t assume me for the worst.
   NINE: Forgive that I’m not perfect.

He omits the tenth instruction. What do you think Omari should add, and why? How can your parents, teacher, and friends support you?
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. TWO SIDES TO THE STORY?
   Each student should read the two opinion articles (pages 14-17 of this guide) published on Cincinnati.com in July 2021. Students should read through each argument and mark all facts with one color and all opinions in the other. Once they are done, they should look at the visual distributions of color on both sides of the debate and write a short statement about why one side might lean more towards fact or opinion and which side they believe has the stronger argument. Have students turn in all papers. Assign them to students with different points of view on this subject, ask both students to have a conversation in which each explains their reasoning. Have them write a summary of the conversation in which they explain both their own and their partner’s reasoning, who they think was correct, and why.

2. Nya teaches Gwendolyn Brook’s poem “WE REAL COOL” in Pipeline. Read and evaluate the poem and compare the themes, language, and style to Pipeline. What does each work of art say about the African-American experience in America? Have things changed? Write a third piece (either a poem, short story, or rap) that illuminates your perspective.

3. Did your experience at Pipeline change your perspective or deepen your understanding of the School-to-Prison Pipeline in America? In groups, create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to educate your peers about the issue. Research facts about the pipeline and take a strong stance. Write a script and act out the PSA (or even film it!) What action do you hope your peers will take to combat the pipeline? Are you encouraging positive personal choices, or institutional change?

WRITING PROMPTS

• What was a moment in the show that stood out to you? Why did it stand out?
• Did you have a question before the performance began? If so, was it answered? What questions do you now have about the performance?
• How would you describe the show to someone who has not seen it?
• What are the conflicts in the play? What are the issues and assumptions that create the conflicts?
• What assumptions are made about Omari? How do those assumptions and expectations affect him?
• Which characters stood out to you? How would you describe their character traits, and how did those traits affect events in the story?
• What other situations in Omari’s life contribute to the conflict in the play?
• Which character did you most connect with, and why? What advise would you give to that character?
• What advice would you give to Omari’s parents? To Omari?
• The character Nya breaks the fourth wall by speaking directly to the audience. What was the purpose of that choice? How does it change the relationship with the audience?
Opinion: Time for CPS to get rid of school resource officers

Elena Thompson  Opinion contributor
Published 10:57 a.m. ET Jul. 26, 2021

Cincinnati Public Schools has an over-discipline problem. Black children in CPS are disciplined five times more frequently and more severely than white students. Instead of deescalation, CPS imposes unnecessarily harsh discipline on students in the name of "safe schools." Suspension. Expulsion. Probation. Arrest.

But there are less harmful ways to keep schools safe.

The vast majority of school incidents can be handled by teachers or administrators without removing children from the classroom or marking their disciplinary record forever. Decades of evidence show that police are ineffective at preventing or mitigating violence at school. Yet, Cincinnati Public Schools has created a culture of calling school resource officers at any sign of misbehavior. Rather than training teachers and administrators on how to deescalate situations, CPS emphasizes the use of police as a primary tool of discipline.

Alternative view: Opinion: School resource officers act as role models

More: Student activists call for removal of police from Cincinnati Public Schools. Could it happen?

Cincinnati SROs respond to a staggering 5,000 incidents per year, most of them basic outbursts that teachers should routinely dispense of without incident. As a result of law enforcement presence on campus, over 400 students negatively interact with the justice system through warrants, arrests and court summonses each year. Most of these students are Black, disabled or both.

Of utmost concern is the lack of oversight regarding the Memorandum of Understanding between the district and the police. The contract gives complete control to CPD and renders the district powerless to know about, or enforce, what police do in schools. Normally, these partnerships grant each side equal bargaining and enforcement power. Schools usually retain the right to
Elena Thompson is a Gallogly Legal Fellow at the ACLU of Ohio

count independent performance evaluations of SROs, receive reports of SRO interactions, or determine the identity and placement of SROs within the district.

Not in Cincinnati. The district signed over all its rights to receive data about police interactions with students, conduct evaluations of SROs, and even say who is within the schools. CPS made itself powerless to monitor what police officers are doing in its schools to its children.

While policing is abundant and unchecked, student resources are scarce. CPS is drastically deficient in the national and state recommended ratios of student support services (like counselors and social workers), which are more effective than police at keeping schools safe, as they help students address social and personal strains as a root cause of misbehavior. Nationally recommended ratios suggest one counselor and social worker for every 250 students and one nurse for every 750 students. To achieve these ratios, CPS would need to hire five times more counselors, 12 times more social workers and three times more nurses than it currently employs. CPS has authorized the hiring of additional social workers and counselors in 2022 but will still fall extremely short of national student support recommendations.

Instead, CPS has put its resources into policing students. In fact, CPS has more police per student than social workers, counselors or nurses. There is one police officer for every 2,235 students, supplemented by an additional 106 security guards. Instead of creating an environment for students to learn from their mistakes, CPS presumes its children are guilty from the start, watching closely until the moment they slip up.

CPS needs to rethink student discipline in many different ways. It needs to reform the way teachers and administrators impose punishments on students and the unhealthy pattern of removing kids from the classroom for minor actions, exacerbating educational inequality and discipline outbursts. It needs to reform the utter lack of transparency and recording of discipline data. It needs to expand restorative justice practices.

Reform and healing includes the removal of police from schools.

CPS needs a system that holds students accountable while keeping them in the classroom. One that addresses issues at their root before misbehavior escalates to merit police involvement. Over a dozen major districts across the country have successfully implemented practices that do just that, and it would work in Cincinnati.

The school board has a duty to protect the students they were elected to serve.

CPS must discontinue policies that irreparably harm children’s futures. They can start by ending their contract with Cincinnati Police Department.

_Elena Thompson is a Gallogly Legal Fellow at the ACLU of Ohio_
Opinion: School resource officers act as role models

Phil Black  Opinion contributor
Published 10:51 a.m. ET Jul. 26, 2021  Updated 10:59 a.m. ET Jul. 26, 2021

For over 50 years, the Cincinnati Public Schools and the Cincinnati Police Department have shared a successful partnership - a partnership forged via the Youth Services Unit/School Resource Officers. The SRO wore many hats of mentor, teacher, coach, counselor, parent and friend to the students who graced the campuses of CPS. Having that positive role model in the form of a CPD school resource officer had a positive impact regarding the perception youth have of law enforcement.

As a student, you remember that special teacher, administrator, or staff member of your school. Although I had many positive members of CPS who added in mentoring and guiding me, I must reflect over 39 years ago. I remember the positive impact of one Officer David Hamler. My parents always taught us to respect authority and adults. As a Black youth, I had that fear of law enforcement as most from my community. The impact of seeing a positive CPD officer everyday took that fear and skepticism away. Officer Hamler became a mentor and friend to us all. He was the cool go-to person for everything.

Alternative view: Opinion: Time for CPS to get rid of school resource officers

More: Student activists call for removal of police from Cincinnati Public Schools. Could it happen?

Fast forward to 2018 to the present. We all have been affected in one way or the other regarding policing in America. The multitude of questionable actions or deadly crimes by the hands of the police have become a major part on how we view law enforcement. "Defund the Police," was the immediate battle cry. Being aware of the statistical data regarding the disparities in the arrest of Black versus non-Black students is alarming, but whenever you are presented with statistical data, you must go deeper into that data to gain the full understanding of why. The uptick of violent crimes across America has presented the cry of "Police Stop This Violence." So, the focus of
keeping a foot on law enforcement has zeroed in on one element of law enforcement, that being the SRO.

One might ask why would a graduating student of the "gem" of CPS, Walnut Hills High School, lead the charge? If you are not aware, Walnut Hills is a college preparatory high school, that has successfully prepared its students for success on the college level. All CPS high schools are doing a fantastic job in this endeavor regarding college preparatory. Remember you always must dig deeper! Why have there not been a charge or influx of the students affected in the data? CPS is made up of roughly 62.2% African American/Black students, with the non-Black students making up the remaining 37.8%.

Reading the disturbing data, you must understand what constitutes an arrest and what criminal act was committed. There are many crimes committed outside of the school that may be brought to the school. CPD and CPS have had a successful memorandum of understanding (MOU) for years. Unlike other SRO and school district partnerships, CPD/City of Cincinnati, fully fund the salary of the SRO. This assignment is sought by those who enjoy working with the youth.

For four of my eight years as an SRO and 33 years in law enforcement with CPD, I had the pleasure of working as the SRO for Walnut Hills High School. As did Officer Hamler some 39 years ago, I mentored, coached, presented and taught various classes and group discussions at Walnut Hills High. Were there ever times for the need of police interaction, yes there was. Did I ever make a physical arrest? Yes, I did. Were there ever felony or serious misdemeanor crimes committed? Yes, there were.

Although these were few and far between, the SRO does not enforce administrative rules, nor do they enforce suspension, expulsion, or probation. The SRO is law enforcement with the emphasis on “RESOURCE.” CPD school resource officers provide jobs, camps, mentoring and career tracking. We all speak of bridging the gap in our communities. What a devastating move this would be to remove such a positive element of bridging that gap.

*Phill Black, of Liberty Township, is a retired Cincinnati police officer who served 33 years in law enforcement. He is a former school resource officer, detective, recruiter and executive aide to the chief of police.*
**Benz**

Mercedes-Benz is a division of the German automotive corporation Daimler AG known for luxury vehicles. The brand’s slogan, “The best or nothing,” reflects its self-fashioned elite status.

**Broadside Press**

Broadside Press was founded in 1965 in Detroit and published many leading black writers including Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, Audre Lorde, and Margaret Walker. In 2015, it merged with another important publisher of black American writing, Lotus Press, becoming Broadside Lotus Press.

**“broken English”**

In its strictest definition, the term broken English refers to the use of English vocabulary with the syntax of a non-English speaker’s native language, affecting such elements as word order, sentence structure, definite articles, and verb tenses. In literature, broken English has often been used to indicate the foreignness of a character, or that character’s lack of intelligence or education. Poets, however, have also intentionally used broken English to create a desired artistic impression, or as a creative experiment writing somewhere between standard English and a local language or dialect.

**Chadsey High**

Playwright Dominique Morisseau says in her Note about the Setting: “Not necessarily NYC, but definitely modeled after it. Can be any inner city environment where the public school system is under duress.” There was a real Chadsey High School in Detroit, Michigan, an urban school located about 4 miles west of downtown Detroit that operated from 1931 to 2009.

**creepin’**

A slang term for cheating in a relationship.

**Crips and the Bloods**

The Crips are a primarily African American street gang that have been active in Los Angeles since the 1960s. With an estimated membership of more than 30,000, the Crips are one of the largest and most violent gangs in the United States. They are known for their bitter rivalry with another predominantly African American gang, the Bloods. Founded in Los Angeles for the purpose of protecting its members from the Crips, the Bloods gang has since branched out throughout the United States, with loosely associated “sets” of Bloods around the country often differing significantly from one another in terms of clothing, operations, and political ideas.

**Dangerous Minds**

Dangerous Minds is a 1995 American drama film based on the memoir My Posse Don’t Do Homework by LouAnne Johnson. The film stars Michelle Pfeiffer as a former Marine who becomes a teacher in an underprivileged high school where students are involved with gang violence and drugs.

**HarperCollins**

HarperCollins is one of the world’s largest publishing companies, with publishing groups in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, India, and China.

**Donny Hathaway**

Donny Hathaway (1945-1979) was an American jazz, blues, soul and gospel singer, songwriter and pianist. His best-known composition is the holiday classic “This Christmas.”
homegoing
A homegoing service is an African-American Christian funeral tradition marking the going home of the deceased to the Lord or to heaven.

lunar eclipse
A lunar eclipse occurs when the moon passes directly behind Earth and into its shadow. In order for this to take place, the sun, moon, and Earth must be exactly aligned, with Earth completely blocking the sun's light from the moon.

metamorphic rock
Igneous rocks are formed through the cooling and solidification of magma or lava. Sedimentary rocks are formed by the accumulation and cementation of fragments of earlier minerals and organisms. When either of these rocks is subjected to the intense heat, pressure, and mineral-rich fluids found well below Earth's surface, it is transformed into metamorphic rock. Recrystallization (the reorganization of atoms) leads to a profound change in physical properties and chemistry, transforming the rock into other mineral types, denser and more compact than the original rock. Different minerals often form in layers, giving many metamorphic rocks a striped appearance. Types of metamorphic rocks include marble, soapstone, slate, and lapis lazuli.

Moses
Moses is a major prophet in a number of religions including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá’í Faith. He features in religious texts including the Bible, the Torah and the Quran. Moses is generally agreed by scholars to be a legendary rather than a historical figure.

Oldsmobile
Oldsmobile was an American car brand produced from 1897 to 2004. The brand's peak popularity occurred in the 1970s, when Oldsmobiles were widely regarded as highly reliable, practical vehicles.

panic disorder
Panic disorder is a psychiatric disorder in which debilitating anxiety and fear frequently arise without reasonable cause. Panic disorder is characterized by panic attacks, periods of being overcome by a fear of disaster in the absence of real danger.

poolhall
Poolhalls typically serve alcohol and sometimes food and offer a variety of other entertainments such as gaming machines, card games, and darts, in addition to pool tables.

Ritalin
Ritalin is a brand name of methylphenidate, a central nervous system stimulant often used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy.

schizophrenia
Schizophrenia is a mental disorder characterized by abnormal social behavior and failure to understand reality. Symptoms include false beliefs, unclear or confused thinking, hearing voices that other do not, reduced social engagement and emotional expression, and a lack of motivation.

semantics
Semantics is the branch of linguistics concerned with meaning. Semantics studies the relationship between signifiers (words, phrases, signs, and symbols) and what they signify.
Hilary Swank
Laurie likely mentions actress Hillary Swank because of her starring role in the 2007 film Freedom Writers, in which she portrays a white school teacher confronting issues such as gang violence that affect her non-white students.

Teacher’s College
Laurie may be using this term to refer generally to any university department of education, or she may specifically have in mind the graduate school of education at Columbia University, which is formally known as Teachers College.

teen pregnancy
Teen birth rates continued to decline from 17.4 per 1,000 females in 2018 to 16.7 per 1,000 females in 2019. This is another record low for US teens and a decrease of 4% from 2018. Birth rates fell 7% for females aged 15 to 17 years and 4% for females aged 18 to 19 years. However, the U.S. teen pregnancy rate remains substantially higher than that of other industrialized nations. In addition, there is a significant disparity in birth rates between different ethnic groups, with the birth rate for African American teens being nearly twice as high twice as that of non-Hispanic white teens. Only 50% of women of any race who give birth while in high school will go on to earn their high school diploma by age 22. Teenage mothers are also more likely to have lower school achievement, suffer from more health problems, have a higher chance of being incarcerated, and are more likely to be unemployed as adults than women who do not give birth in their teens.

West Indian
The Indies was a European colonial term for the lands of South and Southeast Asia, derived from the River Indus and used to connote parts of Asia under Indian cultural influence. After the first of the voyages of Christopher Columbus to the Americas, Europeans began to use the terms West Indies and East Indies to distinguish the Caribbean region from South and Southeast Asia.

The Wire, Season Four
The Wire was a crime drama television series set and produced in Baltimore. The series, which ran from 2002 to 2008, focuses on Baltimore’s drug scene while also exploring storylines concerning local government, schools, and the media. Season Four concentrated on the school system and was lauded by critics as one of the best seasons of American television ever produced.