



MEMORANDUM

To: CJJ Council of State Advisory Groups
From: Naomi Evans, J.D.
Cc: CJJ Staff, CJJ Executive Board
Date: May 12, 2021
RE: Organizational Activities Nov. 2020-May 2021

The following report contains highlights for the organization since the last convening of the Council of State Advisory Groups.

STAFFING & ADMINISTRATION

In March, CJJ welcomed new staff member Ridha Kapoor. Ridha serves as CJJ's Policy and Field Relations Associate and helps staff the CJJ Western Region, CJJ Government Relations Committee, CJJ Racial and Ethnic Disparities Coordinators group, and CJJ Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee.

Ridha has spent four years working with youth inside a juvenile correctional facility in Southern California, where she aided in completing middle and high school coursework, and led workshops in creative writing, music, and more. Ridha's areas of expertise focus on dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline through race and ethnic studies, public policy, education work, and community organizing. Ridha's participation in grassroots and community organizing efforts led her to tackle many issues and their intersections, with racial justice and youth being the root focus. With Ridha's work having taken place throughout San Bernardino County, working with CJJ allows her to gain different perspectives and link juvenile justice work to federal policy in D.C. Ridha hopes to use this work to reform and create spaces where marginalized youth not only feel safe, but empowered.

To contact Ridha, email kapoor@juvjustice.org.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Virtual Hill Days: SAGs from 17 states registered to participate in our Virtual Hill Days on April 19-22. The focus of these meetings was on supporting implementation of JJRA and providing robust funding for youth justice programs as part of FY'22 federal appropriations.

CJJ released an updated and revised In-District Advocacy Toolkit as part of our 2021 Virtual Hill Days. The toolkit helps members identify ways they can stay engaged with their federal lawmakers throughout the year. It also includes updated content on how to engage during Covid. A copy of the toolkit is available [here](#).

CJJ will host a second series of Virtual Hill Days in October as part of Youth Justice Action Month (YJAM). Our hope is to be back in person in 2022, with plans currently to return to the Capitol Hyatt (2019 conference venue) to make Hill Day as accessible as possible for attendees.

If you are interested in joining for Hill Days in October and would like a CJJ staff member to join for one of your visits or to provide other support, please email evans@juvjustice.org.

Congressional Hearing: On May 13th at 10 a.m. Eastern, the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security hosted a hearing on the youth legal system that featured CJJ Emerging Leaders Committee Chair Aaron Toleafoa as one of the panelists, along with Utah's head of juvenile justice, Brett Peterson, Marsha Levick of the Juvenile Law Center and Bryan Stevenson author of Just Mercy. Aaron spoke about the need for reentry supports, the importance of including youth voice in system improvement efforts, and how he has worked to turn his life around since his sentencing.

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Collaborating for Change: More than 30 sites applied for TA this year through our Collaborating for Change project. To assist as many communities as possible, we will be providing a Learning Network for a cohort of promising applicants, and working directly with CoHHIO, based in Ohio. The Ohio project will build upon our 2020 TA in Cincinnati and will focus on decriminalizing status offenses.

To read more about the 2020 work in Cincinnati, see Sarah Henry's article [here](#) on Collaborating for Change.

Emerging Leaders Committee: The theme for the 2021 Youth Summit is Curating Brighter Futures: Paving the Way for the Next Generation. The Summit will take place from August 9-10, 2021 at the Hotel Murano in Tacoma, WA. This year attendees will have the option to attend the summit in-person or virtually. To learn more, click [here](#). In addition to planning this year's Youth Summit, the ELC is also hosting a book club and developing a podcast.

Policy Platforms: Since November, CJJ, in partnership with Dr. Cherie Dawson Edwards has conducted two listening sessions with young people to revise the CJJ policy platform related to law enforcement in schools. The resulting proposal has also been vetted by the R/ED Coordinators, ECD Committee, Government Relations Committee, JJ Specialists and SAG Chairs. It is attached for your review and being considered today for a vote.

Member Support and Development: So far in 2021, CJJ has released two new reports to help support our members and their work. In March, we released a Youth Manual to help young people better understand their role as members of a State Advisory Group. A copy of the Youth Manual is available [here](#).

In partnership with Racial and Ethnic Disparities Coordinators from across the country, CJJ has also created a Peer Resource Guide to help new R/ED Coordinators navigate their work. The guide is also a useful tool for others in the youth justice field who are working to address racial inequities. The guide was released in April and is available [here](#).

CJJ is happy to help with individual SAG training and development needs. If your SAG is interested in support from CJJ, please contact Naomi Smoot Evans at evans@juvjustice.org.

COMMUNICATIONS AND FIELD RELATIONS

Webinars: CJJ has hosted five webinars for our members this year, covering a range of topics from youth partnership to ways to incorporate healing practices into systems of care. Our next webinar, which is scheduled for July, will examine ways to improve work to address Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the youth legal system.

Book Clubs: CJJ is continuing its quarterly Book Club with our next session scheduled for June 24th, during which members will discuss “The Burning House: Educating Black Boys in Modern America.”

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

Youth Summit: CJJ’s 2021 Youth Summit will take place Aug. 9-10 at the Hotel Murano in Takom, Wa. It will be a hybrid event with members able to join in person or via live stream. Nell Bernstein, author of “Burning Down the House” will be joining us. In addition to providing a keynote, Nell will also be interviewing some of the attendees for a new book she is working on.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities Conference: Our Racial and Ethnic Disparities Conference will take place in Louisville, Ky., on November 1-4, 2021 at the [Omni Louisville Hotel](#). The event will feature a track highlighting work that has been done in the state to address R/ED. A current agenda is available [here](#). Registration is available [here](#).

We will have limited capacity and social distancing based on hotel guidelines. Attendees will also be asked to register in advance for workshops. A limited livestream will be available for those who prefer to join remotely. The livestream will feature all plenary speakers and one workshop offering per time slot.