

NOW's RESOLUTION ON OVERCRIMINALIZATION OF YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR

WHEREAS, the grand jury indictment and a charge of manslaughter of Marshae Jones, an African American woman, who miscarried her baby after being shot in the abdomen during a fight, is the latest chapter in a history of the overcriminalization of young women of color; and

WHEREAS, the discriminatory disciplinary practices begin early in life. Among pre-school students, studies show that Black girls are six times more likely to receive out of school suspension than their white counterparts. Black girls represent 20 percent of female preschool enrollment, but 54 percent of female preschool children receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions; and

WHEREAS, racial disparities in suspensions are also apparent in K-12 schools: While roughly 6 percent of all K-12 students received one or more out-of-school suspensions, the percentage is 10 percent for black girls; 5 percent for white boys; and 2 percent for white girls. These suspensions range from racially biased dress code violations regarding hairstyles (i.e., natural hair and braided hair extensions) to suspension for nonviolent crimes such as school absences; and

WHEREAS, Black female students are more likely to be disciplined through law enforcement than their female counterparts. In a 2017 study, Americans overall viewed Black girls as “less innocent and more mature for their age, from ages 5 to 14.” Respondents also believed that “Black girls, compared to White girls, need less nurturing, less protection, to be supported less, to be comforted less, are more independent, know more about adult topics, and know more about sex.” The researchers described this as the “adultification” of Black girls”; and

WHEREAS, if Black girls are viewed as less innocent and older, they are more likely to receive harsher, more severe punishment than other kids. The inherent biased treatment of Black, female adolescent girls within grade schools continues for Black, female adults within the criminal justice system;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Organization for Women (NOW) condemns the Trump administration's rescission of the guidance issued by the Obama administration directing schools to reduce racial disparities in how they discipline students; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NOW condemns racially discriminatory practices within publicly funded educational institutions that result in disproportionality for Black and Brown girls in disciplinary and instructional outcomes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NOW supports legislation that imposes equitable disciplinary guidelines and ensures that all students have access to a nurturing, high-quality learning experience; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NOW supports publicly funded educational institutions that provide culturally responsive education and implicit bias training for all employees at publicly funded educational institutions; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that NOW will stand in solidarity with those working for justice, equity and excellence for all students, including Black and Brown girls who are disproportionately represented in the disciplinary system and the instructional learning gap in publicly funded educational institutions.