

My name is Joyce McMillan, Executive Director of JMACforFamilies (Just Making a Change for Families)

I have experienced the dehumanizing and devaluing effect of policies that shape the U.S. child welfare system, a system that is rooted in slavery and colonialism. The policies that govern this system encourage and support the over surveillance and policing of Black families, traumatic separation of Black families, and ongoing cycles of oppression and poverty for Black families and communities.

It is critical to uproot these policies in favor of those made by people of African descent, for people of African descent. The outcomes that Black families experience today are due to racist practices and policies that are clearly intentional.

We need to put money into families, into building up communities, into building economic wealth for people of African descent. Policymaking budgets must reflect our values, our commitment to antiracist laws and to changing the experiences of people of African descent across the nation. The money is already there, we don't need to create a new funding stream to achieve the goal, we must simply begin to use the money we already have to uplift and not oppress, to help and not harm, to value and respect black bodies and human beings.

My policy work in the U.S. centers on ensuring Black parents know and understand their rights and striking down laws that disproportionately surveil and separate black children from their families under the guise of protecting them when we know the only thing they are protected from is success. If foster care were a good thing, Black people would only get in through affirmative action.

People of African descent must lead in the development of policies that allow their full and equal enjoyment of their human rights. We are the lived experts.