



**FedSDC Oral Statement Delivered by Deanie Anyangwe
April 18, 2024 | Geneva, Switzerland**

Good evening,

My name is Deanie Anyangwe. I was born and raised in the U.S., but also proudly represent the people of Southern Cameroon who continue to struggle against Cameroonian state violence, militarization, and French colonization.

Today, I am here in my capacity as a representative of the The Federal School Discipline and Climate Coalition, led by Christopher Scott and Breon Wells.

First, I want to address some of the lackluster, and disingenuous comments offered by some of the people used as puppets for the U.S.

To be clear, President Joe Biden has no commitment to the rights and dignity of people of African Descent, and is in fact committed to forwarding a political agenda that is explicitly anti-Black.

Ineffective advisory groups and new federal holidays that are not even accessible for some of the most marginalized Black folks does not even begin to address and repair the ongoing violence that Biden continues to inflict on Black people in the US and across the globe.

Second, while FedSDC applauds the ongoing efforts of this Forum in addressing structural racism and violent systems that target people of African descent, we cannot afford to be complacent and placated by the pretty words of colonial representatives.

To be clear, our demand is Police Free Schools. The role of police in the U.S. has a long, sordid history that is inseparable from the enduring legacy of anti-Black racism.

This is particularly true within the context of schools, where Black children are targeted for exposure to physical, sexual, verbal and psychological violence at the hands of law enforcement.

As we advance our collaboration, we underscore the necessity for the deliberate and systematic abolition of all anti-black mechanisms, such as policing, that facilitate violence towards Black people.

Specifically, we offer the following recommendations to the forum:

- First, that a second International Decade for People of African Descent with greater member accountability is established.
- Second, we demand that the US and all member states ratify and/or fully implement existing international human rights standards as it relates to the rights of children and youth of African Descent as reflected in the Conventions on the Rights of the Child and the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

- Third, we recommend that this Permanent Forum collaborate with similarly situated anti-racist UN mechanisms to examine the conditions of Children, Youth and Young Adults of African Descent in schools as it pertains to exclusionary discipline practices such as suspensions, expulsions, and corporal punishment.
- Fourth, we recommend that the High Commissioner studies the impact of digital surveillance and authoritarianism in education and youth serving systems.
- Lastly, we recommend that the Permanent Forum work with Black civil society and similarly situated anti-racist UN mechanisms to develop a comprehensive global digital bill of rights for people of African descent.

We look forward to continuing to support this body in efforts to protect and support children, youth and young adults of African descent, particularly as it relates to educational equity and social justice. Thank you.

**FedSDC Full Written Statement:
3rd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent
April 18, 2024 | Geneva, Switzerland**

The Federal School Discipline and Climate Coalition (FedSDC) supports the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent’s (PFPAD) continued efforts to end structural racism and abolish any and all violent systems, mechanisms, policies and practices that harm children of African Descent. Specifically, we call on the forum to center the deliberate and systematic abolition of all anti-black mechanisms that facilitate violence towards people of African descent. For FedSDC, this includes police-free schools, ending exclusionary discipline in schools as permanent priorities, and to demand another International Decade of People of African Descent.

The role of law enforcement in U.S. public schools has a long, sordid history that is inseparable from the enduring legacy of anti-Black racism in the United States. Scholars such as Kristen Henning have observed that school-based policing emerged in the mid-twentieth century as a response to *Brown v. Board of Ed.*, a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that held *de jure* racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.¹ U.S. lawmakers of that era saw value in school-based police as an effective strategy to maintain racial hierarchy in spite of *Brown*’s mandate to racially integrate public schools—often using officers to enforce the color line by surveilling, antagonizing, and “pushing out” Black students through exclusionary discipline and school-based arrests.² By the late 20th century, the role of policing in schools grew drastically as racialized narratives asserting the inherent criminality of Black youth fueled an era of “tough on

¹ Kristin Henning (2021). *The rage of innocence: How America criminalizes Black youth* (New York: Pantheon Books).

² Henning (2021)

crime” policy approaches.³ The historical emergence of police in U.S. schools should be understood as what scholar Saddiya Hartman describes as an “afterlife” of chattel slavery in the United States—one of many historical projects designed to sustain white supremacy through the persistent and systematic dehumanization of Black people.

From the 1950s to the present day, school-based police disproportionately surveil, punish, and criminalize Black youth and their families. Black students are subjected to school pushout and continue to be overrepresented for every form of school discipline measured by the U.S. Department of Education.⁴ School pushout, or the use of punitive school discipline practices to remove students from the classroom and push them into greater contact with the juvenile and criminal legal systems, includes suspensions, expulsions, corporal punishments, and school-based arrests.

School Pushout: Exclusionary Discipline

Suspensions and Expulsions

Exclusionary discipline practices in schools, such as suspensions and expulsions, severely undermine the mental and developmental well-being of students of African descent. These punitive measures interrupt academic progress and contribute significantly to adverse mental health outcomes, including increased rates of depression, anxiety, and other stress-related conditions.⁵ Furthermore, the presence of police in educational settings intensifies these impacts, as studies have shown that such environments heighten stress and anxiety among students, heightening risks for PTSD and other trauma-related disorders.⁶ Moreover, the pervasive use of surveillance technologies exacerbates these conditions, deepening racial disparities and undermining students’ sense of security and belonging, which are crucial for healthy psychological development.⁷ In light of these considerations, it is vital that our educational policies prioritize the abolition of these harmful practices, replacing them with supportive, community-based disciplinary alternatives that foster the health and well-being of all students. This shift not only addresses immediate educational inequities but also aligns with broader public health goals by mitigating the profound health disparities engendered by punitive disciplinary approaches.⁸

³ Elizabeth Hinton (2016). *From the war on poverty to the war on crime: The making of mass incarceration in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

⁴ Hinton (2016)

⁵ Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. L. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment. *The Urban Review*, 34(4), 317-342.

⁶ Theriot, M. T. (2009). School resource officers and the criminalization of student behavior. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 37, 280-287.

⁷ Kahn, K. B., & Martin, K. D. (2016). Policing and race: Disparate treatment, perceptions, and policy responses. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 10, 82-121.

⁸ Freudenberg, N., & Ruglis, J. (2007). Reframing school dropout as a public health issue. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 4(4), A107.

Corporal Punishment

The United States continues to make victims of children of African descent through violent and unethical practices such as corporal punishment. The use of corporal punishment in public school is either expressly allowed or not expressly prohibited in 23 of 50 states, and according to 2017-18 Civil Rights Data, more than 70,000 students across these 23 states were hit in their schools that year. Notably, corporal punishment is also still allowable in private schools across the nation. The brutal and traumatizing discipline practice involves paddling, hitting, spanking, slapping, or using other methods of physical violence to punish children in schools. Research on corporal punishment has shown that young people who are hit in their schools can experience serious physical trauma, including bruising, cuts, and broken bones.⁹ They can also experience emotional and psychological trauma and feel disconnected from their school communities. This is unacceptable as it undermines the purpose of the school as a safe place for learning. Instead, practices such as these are correlated with poor academic performance and as long as corporal punishment is legal in schools, we are sending the message to all students that physical violence is an appropriate form of conflict resolution, rather than relationship building and understanding the root of personal and interpersonal issues.

Corporal punishment is one way that students are funneled into the school-to-prison pipeline. As with other forms of punitive discipline and policing, Black students are disproportionately abused in their classrooms, though they are not more likely to break school rules. In 2017-18, Black students made up 15% of the public-school population but were the victims of 37.3% of corporal punishment instances. In states that reported instances of corporal punishment, Black boys were twice as likely as white boys to be subjected to corporal punishment, and Black girls were 4 times as likely as white girls to be subjected to corporal punishment. The data reveals corporal punishment as one of the many tools that perpetuates racial discrimination and anti-Black violence in schools. Unsurprisingly, one study of school-based corporal punishment revealed that corporal punishment is used most frequently against Black students in the same counties where the highest numbers of lynchings of Black people took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.¹⁰

Research indicates that youth subject to school pushout face an array of other barriers to academic success and economic security that persist into adulthood. The school pushout crisis reflects decades of racist policy design marshaled in service of the War on Black Youth. And importantly, these racist federal, state, and local policies dating back to the 1950s that leveraged surveillance and criminalization as tools to control the presence of Black youth in public life continue to evolve in alarming ways.

⁹ "Corporal punishment and health." *World Health Organization Fact Sheet* (23 November, 2021). <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/corporal-punishment-and-health#:~:text=A%20large%20body%20of%20research%20shows%20links,specifically%20emotion%20regulation%20and%20conflict%20solving%20skills>

¹⁰ Ward, G., Petersen, N., Kupchik, A., & Pratt, J. (2021). Historic lynching and corporal punishment in contemporary southern schools. *Social Problems*, 68, 41-62.

Policing in Schools

The federal government has been playing an increasing role in the arming and weaponizing of school police. Signed legislation such as the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and the American Rescue Plan represent some of the most recent funding streams allocated to fund police in schools, and initiatives such as the Department of Defense's 1033 program allows school police to acquire excess military-grade weapons, such as armored vehicles, grenade launchers and M-16 rifles.

In the wake of mass shootings, particularly those involving children, U.S. politicians have tried to legitimize the idea that armed schools are safer schools by rushing to implement reactionary policies and allocate resources toward efforts to increase armed personnel in schools. This myth has fueled ineffective and harmful policy responses to school shootings since the 1999 mass shooting at Columbine High School, in the state of Colorado. Evidence repeatedly demonstrates that police are not effective in preventing mass shootings. In fact, data show that fatalities are typically higher when police, or other armed guards are present during school shootings. Research has also shown that police in schools undermine youth social, economic, and academic outcomes. Police change the school environment by increasing chronic absenteeism; in-school and out-of-school suspensions; expulsions; and police referral and arrest. Data from the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights from the 2017-2018 academic year reveals that Black students were 28.7 percent of students referred to law enforcement and 31.6% of students arrested at school, despite representing only 15.1% of the overall student population.¹¹ All of these consequences negatively affect young people's emotional and mental health. Yet, in the face of these well documented facts, U.S. politicians continue to fund the expansion of policing apparatus in schools.

The growing use of police surveillance technologies in schools across the United States has radically transformed the nature of school-based policing. The advent of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) have enabled the growth of a police surveillance state in America's public schools.¹² School surveillance blurs the boundary between the schoolhouse and the jailhouse by providing a digital infrastructure that deepens the role of law enforcement, including immigration enforcement and family policing, in the lives of Black youth and their families. Public schools increasingly partner with law enforcement agencies to deploy a wide range of controversial surveillance technologies, including facial recognition, automated weapons detection, social media surveillance, automated license plate readers, behavioral threat assessments, police-networked smart cameras, predictive policing, and aerial drone surveillance, among others. Civil society organizations like the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT) have shown that these technologies are both popular and increasingly used to punish, surveil, and criminalize Black students and other students from historically marginalized groups. In a 2023

¹¹ Civil Rights Data Collection *Office for Civil Rights, United States Department of Education*, <https://civilrightsdata.ed.gov/data>.

¹² Okoh, C. (2023, November 21). AI is supercharging child surveillance and the school-to-prison pipeline. *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/opinion/technology/4319035-ai-is-supercharging-child-surveillance-and-the-school-to-prison-pipeline/>

survey of educators, CDT found that 38 percent of teachers reported that their school shares sensitive student data with law enforcement; 36 percent said their school uses predictive analytics to identify children who might commit future criminal behavior; 36 percent said their school tracks students' physical location through their phones and other digital devices; 37 percent said their school monitors students' personal social media accounts and 33 percent reported their school uses facial recognition to regulate access to schools.¹³

A growing body of research demonstrates that law enforcement agencies consistently use surveillance technologies such as facial recognition, automated weapons detection, and predictive policing in racially disparate ways that disadvantage Black communities—enabling racial profiling, false arrests, state censorship, and surveillance redlining.¹⁴

Many of the technologies deployed used to criminalize Black youth and young adults are implicated in global human rights atrocities.¹⁵ For example, urban police departments in the U.S. routinely train, collaborate and exchange surveillance tactics with Israeli Occupying Forces, and intelligence agencies.¹⁶ These trainings put U.S. police in the hands of genocidal military, security and police systems that have racked up documented numerous human rights violations against Palestinian people for decades. Human rights activists have argued that these surveillance tactics are used to systematically violate the rights of Black youth, and other marginalized groups, in the United States and beyond.¹⁷ More broadly, American law enforcement agencies use military technologies and equipment to “harden” public schools—cultivating school climates that are hostile to student mental health and academic success.

We applaud the efforts of the Permanent Forum to convene people of African Descent over the last decade to collectively strategize to improve the safety and quality of life and livelihoods of people of African descent. However, it is imperative that this work continues beyond December

¹³ EdTech threats to student privacy and equity in the age of AI. *Center for Democracy and Technology* (September 2023). <https://cdt.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/FINAL-Off-Task-Report-Slides.pdf>.

¹⁴ “ShotSpotter is deployed overwhelmingly in Black and Latinx neighborhoods in Chicago,” *MacArthur Justice Center*. <https://endpolicesurveillance.com/burden-on-communities-of-color/>; Feathers, T. (2021, July). Gunshot-detecting tech is summoning armed police to Black neighborhoods. *Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/88nd3z/gunshot-detecting-tech-is-summoning-armed-police-to-black-neighborhoods>.

¹⁵ Rose, J. (2016, August). Baltimore police can't explain why their all-seeing spy planes were kept secret. *Vice*. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/9a3nyp/baltimore-police-cant-explain-why-their-all-seeing-spy-planes-were-kept-secret>; McGrory, K. & Neil Bedi, N. (2020, December). The man behind the machine. *Tampa Bay Times*. <https://projects.tampabay.com/projects/2020/investigations/police-pasco-sheriff-targeted/chris-nocco/>.

¹⁶ Privacy International (2016, July). *The global surveillance industry*. https://www.privacyinternational.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/global_surveillance_0.pdf; Wilson, J. (2023 December 8). US police agencies took intelligence directly from IDF, leaked files show. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/dec/08/us-police-agencies-idf-files-blueleaks>; Gadzo, M. (2020, June 12). How the US and Israel exchange tactics in violence and control. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/12/how-the-us-and-israel-exchange-tactics-in-violence-and-control>

¹⁷ Eye on Surveillance. (n.d.) *New Orleans and Israel: Connected by Surveillance*. <https://eyeonsurveillance.org/blog/nola-israel-connections>; “With Whom are Many U.S. Police Departments Training? With a Chronic Human Rights Violator – Israel,” *Amnesty International*, August 2016, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/updates/with-whom-are-many-u-s-police-departments-training-with-a-chronic-human-rights-violator-israel/>.

2024. The work of ending exclusionary punishments and eradicating prisons, policing, surveillance, and all other forms of state-sponsored punishment as systems that perpetuate structural violence, upholds social hierarchies and undermines the rights and dignity of children of African descent are the only adequate approaches to the scale of harm from racialized state violence. In order to combat these systems, we should continue to offer life-affirming, world-building visions that seek to undo the social, economic, and political conditions that gave rise to state systems of punishment and containment. We must continue to build ecosystems of care that match the needs of all people at scale, beginning in our classrooms where Black children spend most of their wake hours. To do so, we offer the following recommendations:

Recommendations:

- Establish a second International Decade for People of African Descent in 2025, which should include greater accountability for member states in how they address violent, discriminatory, anti-Black policies and practices that harm children of African descent.
- The Permanent Forum on People of African Decent (PFPAD) should collaborate with the Independent Expert Mechanism on Racial Equality and Justice in the Context Law Enforcement (EMLAR), The Working Group of Experts on African Descent, and Committee on the Elimination of Racial Disparities (CERD) to examine the conditions of Children, Youth and Young Adults of African Descent in schools as it pertains to exclusionary disciplinary practices such as suspensions, expulsions, and corporal punishment.
- The High Commissioner should study the impact of digital surveillance and authoritarianism in education and youth serving systems.
- The Permanent Forum should work with Black civil society and similarly situated anti-racist UN mechanisms to develop a comprehensive global digital bill of rights for people of African descent. This is particularly important as it relates to protecting the rights of children of African Descent in schools.
- The US and all member states ratify and/or fully implement existing international human rights standards as it relates to the rights of children, youth and young adults of African Descent as reflected in the Conventions on the Rights of Children and the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Thank you! We look forward to working with you and deepening our collaboration with the forum on these critically important issues.

ABOUT FEDSDC

FedSDC is a diverse group of local community organizers, national organizations, and directly impacted students, youth, families, and community members committed to advocating for legislative and federal action to protect the interests and educational rights of Black and Brown students and youth through a racial and educational equity lens. Establishing police-free schools

while implementing effective, non-punitive, and culturally-sustaining practices in schools and alternatives to school discipline, is a core value for our coalition.

Sincerely,

The Federal School Discipline and Climate Coalition (FedSDC)

Our coalition partners present at the 3rd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent:

- Center for Law and Social Policy
- Healing Cities Baltimore
- The Coalition on International Aid
- The Daniel Initiative
- The Tech Equity Council
- The Economic Equity Roundtable
- Open Society Foundation

Cc: Members of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent