

ALBIZU CAMPOS SPEAKS

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An Jimenez

Editor's Note

Albizu Campos Speaks! is the student newspaper of Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School, located at 2739 W Division Street. It is meant to offer students a platform for their thoughts, experiences, and concerns without extensive editorial control. The students created their own style guide, came up with their own ideas, conducted their own journalistic research, and wrote their own articles. They received support and encouragement from their teacher, David Carter, but the work is their own. Please enjoy what they have to say about their experience as students and as young people growing up in Chicago.

Contributors

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Crime and Justice

The Controversy of Police Murders

Jemarjea Harris

Imagine you are talking to your friend, and you see a police officer walking towards you. You know you have a gun on you, and you aren't trying to go back to jail, so you run. The police officers chase you down 62nd from Eberhart to 67th and Rhodes. Since you know you have your gun on you, you're gonna have to pull it out to try and throw it so if you get caught, then you won't have it on you. As you hop the gate and try to get rid of the gun, you're shot 7 times by the police officer, and die on the spot.

Now this story actually happened on March 29th, 2014. Raason Shaw, also known as Lil' B, was accused of making a "drug trade" with someone, even while his friends were saying he never even sold drugs before. The police were already targeting him for his

criminal record, so they believed the shooting was also targeted.

We see a lot of police officers shooting people with their backs turned, like Laquan McDonald. Laquan McDonald was killed on October 20th, 2014, in Chicago. He was 17 years old when Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke shot him 16 times with his back turned. The police officer Jason Van Dyke claimed he had a knife and was an immediate threat to him and his fellow companions, but the dash cam footage released over a year later on November 14, 2015, is showing otherwise. Officer Jason Van Dyke was charged with first degree-murder the same day, but after spending 3 years in Cook County jail, he was found guilty of second degree-murder and 16 counts of aggravated battery, only being sentenced to 81 months (6 years and 9 months) in prison, and was let out a little over 3 years for "good behavior." So yes, we know that police

like to make up reasons to get legal kills.

Laquan McDonald was my cousin, and around the time of his death, I had just turned 5 years old. I remember the stories my mom would tell me about how racist the police officers are. As a child, I have been with my cousins and uncles as they have had racist police encounters, but I believe the police were trying to be a little kind for seeing a kid in the backseat, but I've always been good at reading body language.

The Laquan McDonald murder was obviously racially motivated, but what about the police killings that seem to be more justified? With the Raason Shaw murder, we know that he was most likely targeted and killed based on the fact of him being arrested three times before for gun charges, and the police wanting to interrogate him about different cases for unknown reasons. This killing seems like it could have been targeted rather than just an accident since the police definitely know he might have had a gun on him and labeling him armed & dangerous, but you can definitely imagine how some people might see this case more on the side of the police.

A survey sent to 26 students at our school showed that, in response to the scenario based on the killing of Laquan McDonald, 85.2% of respondents said that what the police did was not acceptable or deserved consequences, and 14.8% said it was acceptable or un-

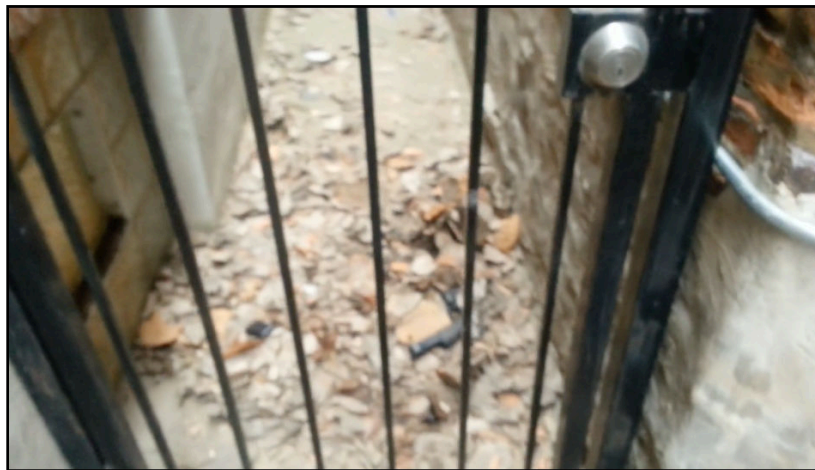
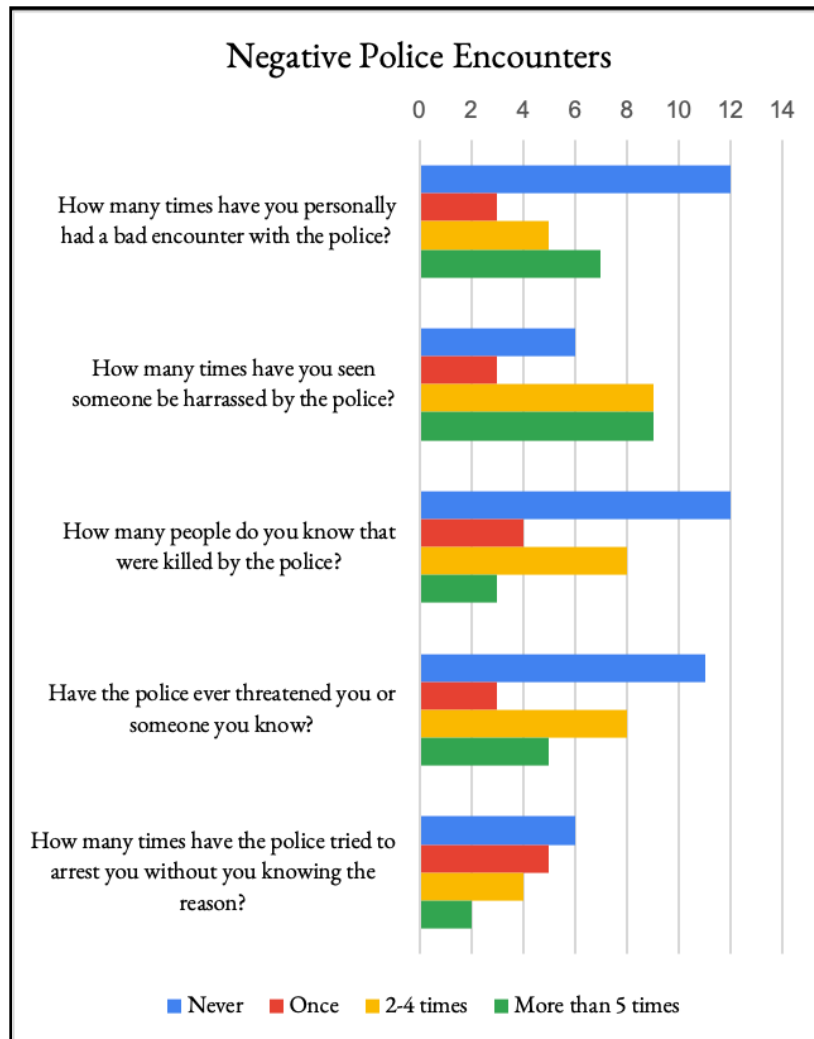


Photo from bodycam footage taken soon after the shooting of Raason Shaw shows a gun in an alley that police claim Raason aimed at them.

Photo courtesy of COPA Log #1068271.



Data taken from survey of 26 students at Pedro Albizu Campos High School.

derstandable. As such, most people from my school believe the scenario around Laquan McDonald's shooting is unjustified, and as we know the public had an outrage from police using deadly force and not taking accountability. However, responding to a scenario based on the police's story around the killing of Raason Shaw involving his possession of a gun, only 40.7% said it was not acceptable or deserved consequences and 59.3% said it was acceptable or understandable. This shows that people are less sympathetic and under-

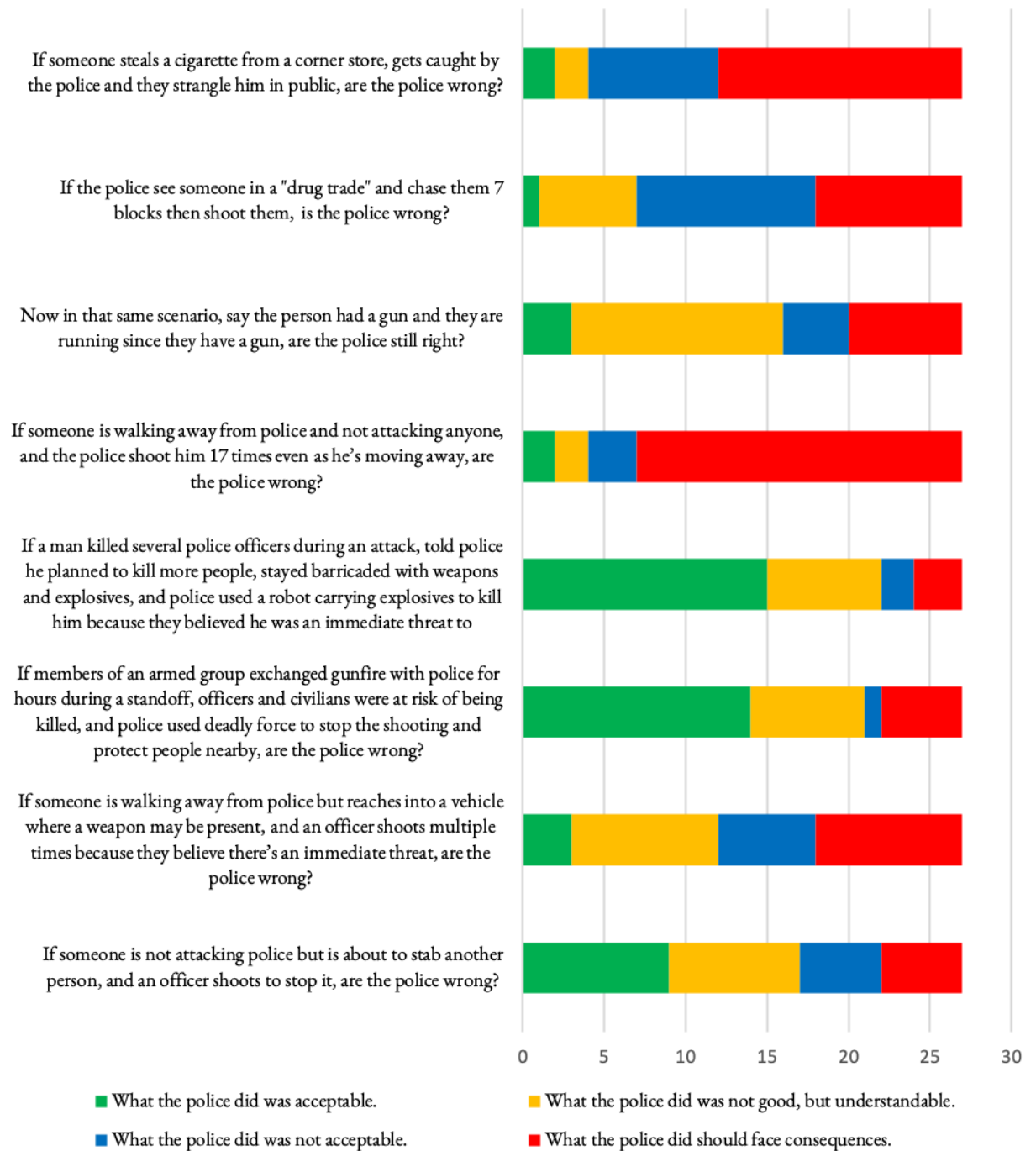
stand the police for killing Raason when a gun is brought in the picture. On the other hand, in response to a scenario based on Raason's death without the gun being present, 74% of students said it was not acceptable or deserved consequences and 26% said it was acceptable or understandable. Therefore, most people believed that the shooting was unjustified even when drugs are involved, and the important factor is the presence of a gun. In a related scenario also based on a real police murder, where someone reached into a vehi-

cle where a "weapon may be present," 55.5% of students reported that subsequent murder was not acceptable or should receive consequences while 44.5% said it was acceptable or understandable. The mere idea of a presence of a gun made the public opinion a little more controversial, and more sympathetic to the officer instead of the guy when no weapon was recovered. Finally, in a scenario in which the police intervened to stop a murder from happening and killed the alleged assailant, only 37% of students said what the police did was not acceptable or should receive consequences and 63% said it was acceptable or understandable. As such, people are more likely to show sympathy to the officer when they use deadly force when a civilian's life is in danger.

In 2016 on July 7-8th in Dallas, Texas, away from the police murders in Chicago, Micah Xavier Johnson, a former U.S. Army soldier who served in Afghanistan had planned this attack. People who knew Micah said he was always angry about the police shooting black men with no probable cause. During the days leading up to the shooting, Micah had been researching weapons, combat tactics, and when the right time for the situation would be. Micah started the attack during a protest on July 7th by opening fire from a roof near the protest. During Micah's shooting spree, civilians and officers took cover as he sprayed bullets and switched locations during the attack. Five officers were killed during his shooting spree as he was target-

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Police Murder Scenarios



Data taken from survey of 26 students at Pedro Albizu Campos High School. Notice a trend that people are more favorable to the police in instances involving a gun or other lethal weapon.

ing officers more than civilians as he was enraged for them killing black men with no probable cause. During the shootout, which lasted 5

hours from 8:58 PM to 2:00 AM with 4 more officers being shot and 2 civilians being injured, the police had enough. After trying to negoti-

ate with Micah, the officers decided to send a bomb robot strapped with bombs, which is normally used to inspect dangerous situa-

tions, the robot got closer to Micah and exploded, killing him and destroying the robot. This is one of the first major U.S. cases where a robot was used. After his death, shockingly, people actually accused the police of using excessive force and using military style tactics against someone who was in the military. Now, when we asked the 26 students at our school about the scenario, only 18.5% of students said that what the police did was unacceptable or deserved consequences, while 81.5% of people said that this was acceptable or understandable. This shows how people are more understanding of the police when some random is committing apparently random acts of violence and they use deadly force to stop it.

Now, what about the real controversial police shootings? On December 8, 1969, in Los Angeles, California, police arrived at the Panthers Los Angeles office to serve search warrants related to illegal weapons, allegations, and arrest warrants for several members. The Panthers believed the raid was politically motivated and part of other government efforts to suppress the organization. When officers attempted to enter the building, gunfire broke out. The police blamed the Panthers for shooting first while the Panthers blamed the police for shooting 1st. The bangout lasted for nearly over 5 hours with nobody being killed but people were injured. The Panthers were very sure the attack wasn't about guns but were being targeted by the FBI for their organization,



The Black Panther Party took over the California State Capitol in 1969.
Photo courtesy of the State Governors' Negative Collection, 1949-1975, Washington State Archives.

political activism, and criticism of racism. Years after this shootout happened, Documents released afterward showed the FBI had actively worked to disrupt and weaken groups it considered radical, including the Black Panthers. That made many people view the raid as part of a larger coordinated effort. This is important because most people do not support the black panthers for doing this bangout since most people don't know about the black panther party's antics and their political presence. When we check the survey, 77.8% of people say what the police did was acceptable or understandable, and only 22.2% say what the police did wasn't good and the rest say the police should face consequences, similar to the Dallas shootout with Micah Johnson. The scenario was listed with the following language: "If members of an armed group exchanged gunfire with police for hours during a standoff, officers

and civilians were at risk of being killed, and police used deadly force to stop the shooting and protect people nearby, are the police wrong?" Since the survey question did not connect the political background of the Black Panther Party to this incident, most people responded in a similar way to the Dallas shootout. Perhaps if people had known the backstory of how the police came to their territory and how the FBI were targeting them and this was to weaken the group, they would have been more sympathetic.

The Legal System from Our Perspective

Anonymous

Editorial Note: The accounts in this story were written by students at Albizu Campos, but the names below are fake.

Police

The police will do a traffic stop

for any reason they can find, such as tinted windows, smoke coming out of a vehicle, or trying to manipulate you to believe you did something you didn't, like making a complete stop at the sign, or running a light. They try to use anything for probable cause. Now once they actually have you stopped they will try to find reason to get you out of your car, literally anything: an open can of old alcoholic beverage or even something sillier like a duck in the ashtray or lie like they smell weed when you didn't smoke recently. Now they state they are trying to search for drugs but they are actually looking for weapons. They might find a bag of weed and keep it, but if the frisk was for weed, why didn't they charge you for it? Now after that, if they find a gun they will try to use any reason I listed to try to get probable cause.

Chris: November, 2023. My first time in police custody may be different from others in many ways. Me and a few friends made a bad choice to ride around in a stolen vehicle with a busted window after school with a machine gun, which led to an intense high speed chase which lasted for about 45 mins until they called for reinforcements, which was the helicopter that helped catch us getting off the e-way out west by Rush which is at Ashland and Harrison. Once all three of us got caught they decided to rough us up there. All of us left with minor injuries from the police. By us all being minors they decided to split the charges between everyone. I was driving and got charged with stealing a motor vehicle, another one of us got charged with trespassing in

a stolen motor vehicle, and the last one caught a machine gun charge.

February 19, 2025. It was a stolen vehicle chase again but this time I wasn't with no defendants and it wasn't as long, only about 10 mins. But it was similar to the first time where they called reinforcements again, which was the helicopter, which seen me get out the vehicle and run. I got arrested by a state trooper and they a little different. They don't got a home police station, so they took me to two different police stations. Honestly it took all night to get took my prints and mugshots, but by 11 they got the call to keep me and take me to the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC). [...]

June, 2025, before fathers day. Even though I'm not a father I like to celebrate, so I said I was with an adult to leave on my way to find some clothes. It was going nice. Soon we pulled up to the store. The police put something under our wheel then tried to apprehend us. We fled the scene. We got out to run, get away, but it wasn't a stolen vehicle this time so we went back. Soon as we went back, they boxed us in, found a firearm and based on my previous history, put it on me.

Court

The public defenders is not good for a case because we believe they work with the state's attorney and judges. If they lose a case they will not be seen as a good public defender and they will tell you to take probation to trap you in the system. The data we got from the Chicago Appleseed Center for Fair Courts is that in Cook County, less than 5% cases go to trial, about a

third get dismissed before conviction, and the rest plead guilty. The state is also getting funded more than public defenders instead of it being equal and since the state is getting more money they will do they job better and keep getting people locked up. Also the public defender will tell you to take probation or jail time even though the case is beatable. And it's not worth fighting if it means staying in jail during pre-trial. That's why we say they work to get you cheated on by the system.

Chris: That morning after I was arrested the first time, I had the rights to court. I went to court to be released on EM (electric monitoring). I was on it for 30 days, February 20 to March 20. I got off one day before my birthday, but I agreed to home confinement to only be released with a guardian. [...]

After being sent to JTDC, in the morning I saw a few faces from the real world. We all had court since we all had just came, but my real judge wasn't there so I had a sub. He did about five people before me. Out of five, three went home. Then he saw me. He saw that I was on pretrial release from a previous situation, so he decided to keep me and he felt my real judge was gonna say the same thing. Two days later the real judge made the same decision as the sub judge, and I wasn't surprised.

Greg: My first time being locked up in November 2023. I thought doing bad things was having fun. I was locked up for two guns and a stolen car, but one was a machine gun and I did 30 days in JTDC. I didn't know anything about the case, I just

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wanted to come home after my first court date, but the judge was trying to label me as a menace and keep me in there until I lost or beat my case. So I just pleaded guilty to the machine gun, and the other gun and car got threw out, and I got 18 months probation. I see why the judge tried to label me as a menace because we went on a 30-45 min intense high speed chase.

I didn't have a lawyer and the public defender was no help because she let the judge tell her how and what to do. I also feel the public defenders work with the judge. When we were talking before court, which was only for a couple minutes, I told her, "Can you tell him let me do my probation time," which was like 4 months with time served. This was because I wanted to get off probation and fly out for my 18th birthday. Me doing the probation for a year and a half was a big obstacle because I couldn't do anything.

My probation officer was popping up at my school sometimes. I wasn't there, I was doing drugs on probation because I thought I could, and got into more trouble. December, 2024, the judge sent me to a drug program but I didn't go. I went on the run for 3 months because I didn't wanna go and went to court on January 17, 2024, and got locked back up. The judge thought I wasn't listening to his rules because I was barely going to school and smoking weed, so he sent me back to jail until March, 2025, I did one month and a half. On probation again, I got myself together and got my cases expunged. Now I'm 18, not on no police papers, and trying to get myself

together because I know the county jail is nothing nice and is a blessing to make it out.

Juvenile Detention

We conducted a survey to see if anyone has been to JTDC at our school. 1 out of 10 people have been in custody and every single person who went went multiple times. This shows that during their first time being there they have not impacted. In Chicago, there were multiple lawsuits against JTDC for numerous reasons, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, and being stripped searched. There have been many controversial discussions on if they should destroy the building or hire new staff due to many problems and concerns over many years. But it still hasn't happened. It is supposed to leave an impact on where children shouldn't want to come back but kids who attend and stay for a time period say it feels like an all boys school. They eat nice

food and spend time periods watching TV, going to the games room. If they make level, they have nice stores and get to go to rec. Rec is going outside to the yard and going to the gym room.

Chris: *When I arrived at JTDC, I had to take my clothes off to get searched again. Then they take you to the back for a wristband and to take a shower before they take you to your cell. I go up to a thing called intake for new people to see if they are going home or upstairs again which is a temporary stay. [...]*

The next time it was the same process: getting searched again and going to get in the shower before you go up. You feel uncomfortable, but it is what it is, then I went up. This time I felt like they were gonna keep me until the morning, but I wasn't tripping. I went up the stairs to go to sleep. [...] The third time, when the judge didn't grant bond, at first it didn't even feel real. Like everything



The Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center located on the Near West Side of Chicago.

Photo courtesy of Cook County Detention Facility and Court.

was moving, but I was just watching it happen. The doors, the loud buzz when they open and close, the echo of people talking down the halls—it all hit different when you know you're not leaving whenever you want. It was a few individuals who got kept with me but they reacted differently, they went back upstairs to start a fight.

Few days go past, I move upstairs now, since I was staying. I ran into one of my closest friend's brother. They move me into his deck so I was a lil' comfortable. But when you first come up, it's at night and you can't leave the cell while everybody else out. They gave me 8:00 snack and meal. During that time period, I watched a big group fight that dislocated a CO shoulder for trying to break it up.

The days started to blend together. You wake up early, same routine, same faces, same walls. At first, I was just trying to stay low, not get into anything, just watch and learn how things worked. But you can't just stay invisible in a place like that. People notice you, test you, try to figure out what kind of person you

are. Some people were loud, always trying to prove something. Others stayed quiet, like they already knew how this went. I started picking up on little things like who to talk to, when to speak, when to just mind my business. It wasn't written down anywhere, but everybody followed those rules. During that time, I can't lie, it made me tougher. Not just physically, but mentally. You learn patience, you learn control, and you learn that every decision actually matters. Because there, one small mistake can turn into a big problem real quick. I spent my time playing games, going to gym, and outside there I witnessed a lot of things such as fights, smuggling things, etc. even though it was only 30 days.

By the time I got closer to leaving, I wasn't the same person who walked in. I understood things differently. I moved differently. I started thinking more about what I wanted my life to look like when I got out, instead of just going day by day. I learned a lot and it made me shape the way I am now.

Greg: My dad been to jail most of my life and is in there right now, so

I just look at everything as a blessing, and a lesson from other people mistakes. So I won't step in their footsteps and keep a clear head to get my money and get my life together because as everybody knows, jail is not a place to be and you need money to be there, because you need to eat and get things. So overall jail is a scam because you are going to get out and do the same thing and I feel our Black people can always beat the system.

Daredevil v. Punisher

Justin De Jesus

Daredevil is one of my favorite heroes. The reason he is my favorite is because he is unique unlike other heroes and he has many great qualities about himself for example. He doesn't kill criminals. He doesn't kill criminals because of his moral code and his Catholic faith. He often struggles to hold in his violent actions while being Catholic, and he fears that crossing his moral code would mean him losing his soul. He is the "Man Without Fear."

Despite losing his sight and rely-

DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!



ing on his super senses he dives headfirst into deadly situations against impossible odds. He is very brave and has a lot of courage to fight anyone/anything that is bad. In the comics, when he was 13 years old, Matt Murdock (Daredevil's true identity) saw a elderly man about to get hit by a runaway truck carrying radioactive chemicals he pushed him out of the way, then the chemicals fell into his eyes and he sacrificed his own sight and safety just to save an old man. Another thing that happened to prove my point is that in the comics when Wilson Fisk, also known as Kingpin, destroys Matt's life, leaving him homeless, mentally broken, and hunted by Kingpin's men, Matt Murdock refuses to give up. By getting back up and still fighting even when he has nothing left and nobody left, he still has courage. When Kingpin realizes his destruction of Matt's life did not break his spirit, he realizes: "A man without hope is a man without fear." Matt fights back from absolute rock bot-

tom to regain his real identity and his superhero identity.

On the other hand, the Punisher is a bad superhero. There are many facts that support my thoughts. One fact is that he kills criminals. With the Punisher he doesn't think before he kill. He wants revenge but when you want revenge too badly, it sometimes crosses the boundaries of being a superhero. Superheroes don't kill criminals, they give them a second chance. Frank Castle (Punisher's true identity) is driven by rage, trauma and anger because of his family's death. He doesn't think criminals should get a second chance, because he thinks that they will come back and do the same thing. This is why I think he is a bad hero because he doesn't show the qualities of being a True Hero. In Daredevil Season 2, Episode 3, Frank Castle attempts to execute Grotto, a criminal, on a rooftop while Daredevil intervenes, leading to an intense fight. Another scene in the show is when

Daredevil and Punisher have an argument on a rooftop where Punisher confronts Daredevil's morality, arguing that he is a "half-measure" for refusing to stop evil permanently.

The differences between Daredevil and the Punisher is Punisher doesn't have mercy on who he kills, Daredevil does. Also Daredevil doesn't kill criminals unlike Punisher, and Daredevil has a moral code Punisher doesn't. The people know Daredevil for doing the right things, the people know Punisher for doing the wrong things. These are the reasons I think Daredevil is the better Superhero.

Why do other people like Daredevil? Daredevil is, paradoxically, a man who fails often, gets severely beaten, and deals with immense personal tragedy. Fans connect with his ability to constantly get back up when his life is falling apart and fans like how he is in almost every comic and his comic stories have good writing.

Politics

What "Community Development" Really Means

Nathaniel Salgado

If you live in Humboldt Park or frequently spend time in the neighborhood, you've probably noticed some small changes in the community recently. Many things such as construction around housing, community facilities, and street organization have seen an increase in development. Within the past 10-15 years these small changes have remained consistent, leaving the community seemingly up for grabs.

But it's important to understand what keeps the neighborhood grounded. While I'm writing this, I'm reminded of the cultural roots that have been developed in this neighborhood. Two steel flags that stand 59ft tall mark what is



One of two gateways to Paseo Boricua on Division and Artesian, constructed in 1995, standing 59 feet high.

Photo by Eduardo Arocho, Humboldt Park resident and founder of the Paseo Boricua Tour Company.

known as Paseo Boricua. Over the years Humboldt Park has become a vibrant, historical Puerto Rican community. This Barrio Boriken has been developed, politically, cul-

turally, and economically by the Puerto Rican Dons & Doñas that have carried forward a diaspora.

The identity of Humboldt park has been influenced by the strong political roots that have been developed by the Puerto Rican community. The founding of this school is an example of political power because it was one of the first Puerto Rican institutions that created a space for the people. Created in order to address the lack of education and curriculum young boricuas were dealing with, this school was founded by Puerto Rican nationalists, like Carlos Alberto Torres, Oscar Lopez, and Carmen Valentín who also fought for Puerto Rican independence. Meanwhile, Jose Lopez and Billy Ocasio worked with the city to make political space for Puerto Ricans.



An untitled mural located on Campbell and Division painted by Cristián Roldán and students at his organization, Barrio Arts & Culture Youth. The mural reflects on the displacement of the Puerto Rican community and the murals that have been painted over in the process.

Photo by Cristián J. Roldán Aponte.

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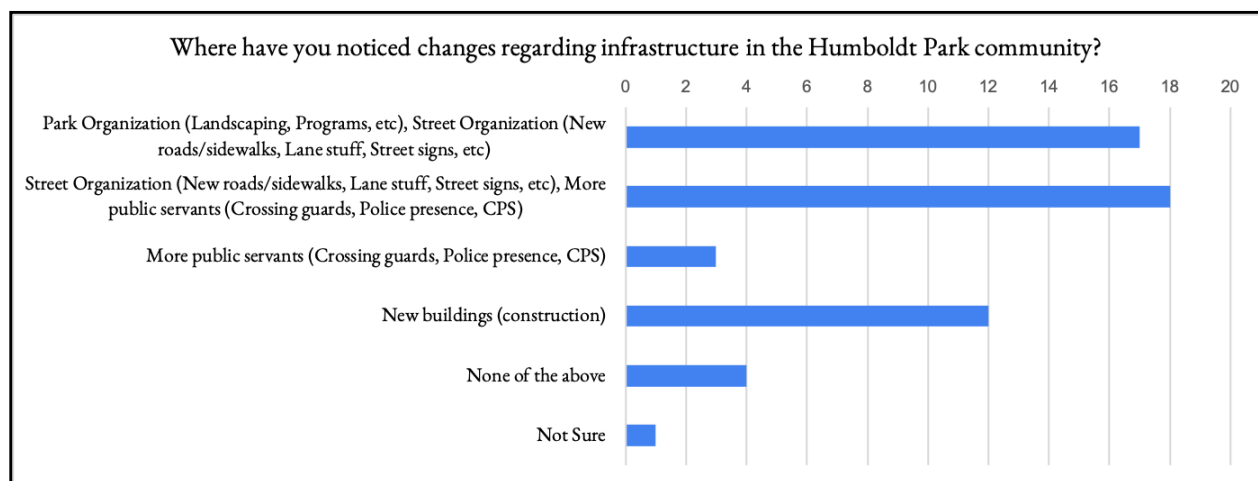
The Puerto Rican identity of Humboldt Park has developed strong roots of political power. The founding of this school is an example of political power because it's one of the first Puerto Rican institutions that created a space for the people. The Young Lords advocated for the same things that people were concerned about. They fought for the goals of the Puerto Rican community. The National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture makes the preservation of arts a political statement. On Paseo Boricua and through Humboldt Park, you can see barbershops named after Puerto Rican towns, grocery stores, restaurants, non-profits, and cultural institutions. They offer classes to learn cuatro and tiple, bomba and salsa. The Luquillo and Jayuya barber shops on Division Street, named after towns in Puerto Rico, create opportunities for Puerto Rican barbers from the island. From what I have seen, the barber shops offer opportunities for people from Puerto Rico who can't find other jobs because they can't speak Eng-

lish, or because they have struggled to find the financial security to complete their education. If you are from this neighborhood, and if you are about this neighborhood, they will give you opportunities, even when you have been labeled as a "knucklehead" or a "trouble maker" elsewhere. For Puerto Ricans, and the whole neighborhood, the businesses allow people to have access to Puerto Rican food and music that you might get on the island, and you get all the innovations that form from the interaction between the diaspora and the island. It is just the energy and the swag that exists in the culture, whether it is the sports, the hobbies.

These roots have branched off into the legacies of community organizers, advocates, and leaders. Externally, you can celebrate your culture without putting others down. According to a report by the Puerto Rican Agenda, the community "is aware of the dangers of using Puerto Rican culture reduced to a whimsical notion of solidarity such as the *mancha de platano* (stain of

plantains) in order to shape political action. At the highest level of abstraction, a strategic deployment of culture is aware of the necessity to 'be-with' and not 'separate-from' the other. In sum, it represents an ethical commitment to the retelling of histories that are inclusive of marginalized groups." Sometimes our pride comes at the expense of making yourself superior, but these Puerto Rican movements have come from a place of fighting for the rights of your own people, and fighting to liberate yourself. Even in the culture of bomba there is the legacy of Puerto Rican resistance against slavery and oppression.

The Puerto Rican Agenda has listed their main policy objects for the community as addressing the displacement of Puerto Ricans in Humboldt Park from their homes by constructing affordable housing, addressing the displacement of Puerto Rican businesses by establishing more Puerto Rican business economic development, to support community schools in the Community as a Campus initiative to



Data from survey of 55 students and staff at PACHS.

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address issues of Puerto Ricans dropping out of high school and not reaching levels of higher education in disproportionate rates, promoting access to high quality Puerto Rican groceries to address health concerns in the community, create social services and programming to address youth violence and disproportionate rates of incarceration, investing in the creation of non-profits that serve Puerto Rican populations, women, and preserve cultural institutions and celebrations like Fiesta Boricua and the Puerto Rican Parade. In order to fight against the displacement of the Puerto Rican community, the



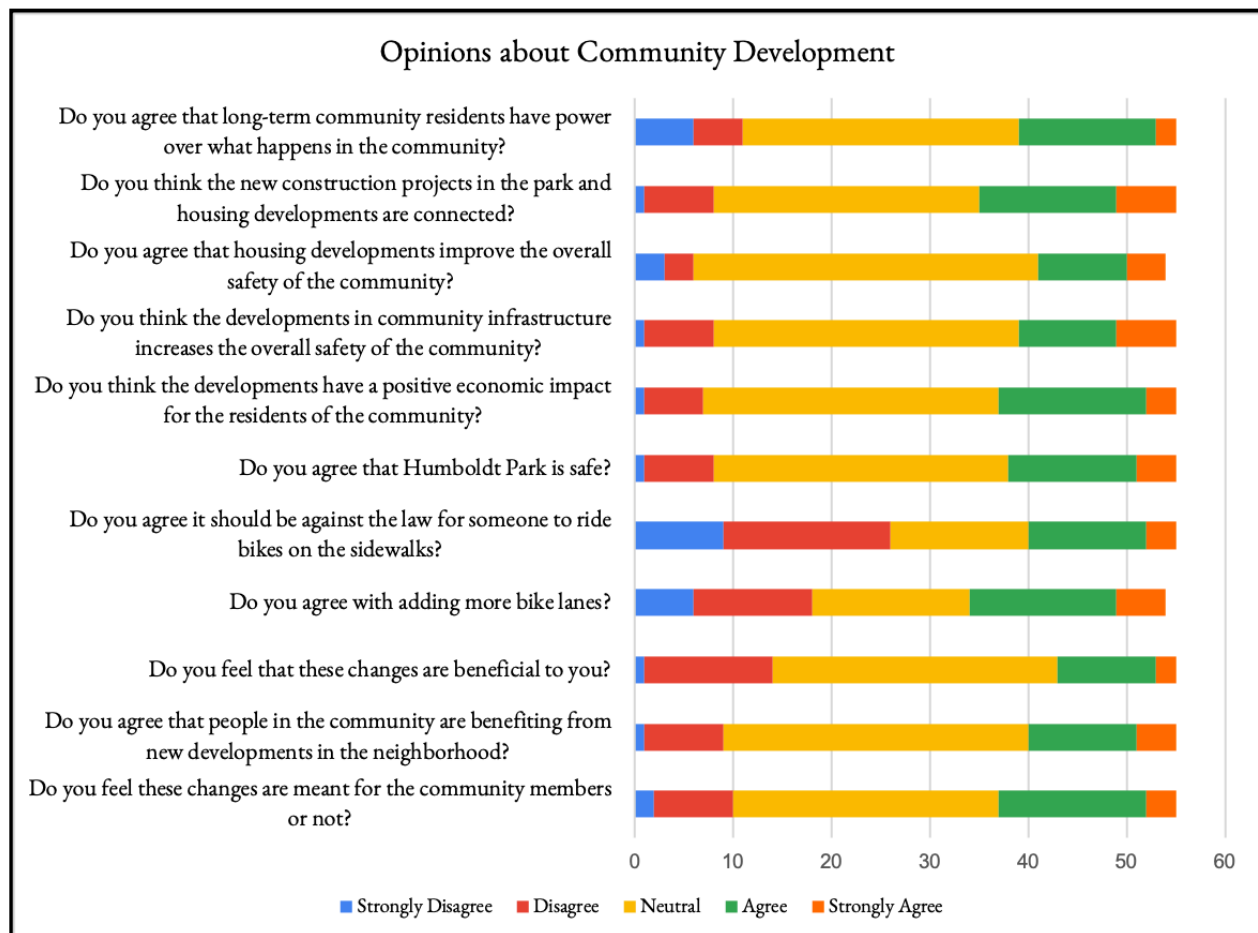
A bike lane and speed bump recently constructed in Humboldt Park.

Photo courtesy of the City of Chicago. Albizu Campos Speaks! is not affiliated with the City of Chicago and the views expressed within this article are not sponsored or endorsed by the City.

Puerto Rican Agenda mobilizes Puerto Rican culture to “address the fragile conditions of a community, for underneath the celebrations there is a sense of possible disappearance: economic diminishment, social disappearance, the

loss of affordable housing, and so on. Perhaps culture as a politics bears a heavier burden in Chicago than on the island itself, for here it faces disappearance in a more visceral way.”

Meanwhile, the community de-



Data from survey of 55 students and staff at PACHS. For most questions, the most favored answer was “neutral,” demonstrating the apathy of respondents towards recent community development projects.

velopment goals according to those gentrifying the community are to construct bike lanes, build expand facilities and amenities in Humboldt Park, and build new condos. On the one hand, one can argue that these developments benefit everyone living in the community regardless of who you are, whether you are new to the community or you are a long-term resident. But when we compare these goals to those listed by the Puerto Rican agenda, we can see that there is not only not much overlap, but that the Puerto Rican Agenda's goals are actively intending to limit the displacement of long-term residents by the new developments. To find out how people feel about these new developments, I gave a survey to 55 members of the Albizu Campos school community, including students and staff. While overall, the number of people opposed and in favor of various kinds of developments that have occurred in Humboldt Park were equal, the most common response was neutrality. Many students and staff-members simply do not really care about these developments, and I believe this is the best evidence we can have to show that these developments are not really *for* us, even if we, in theory, have equal access to them. (With that said, about a quarter of the survey respondents reported that they have been at some point been prevented from or had issues accessing community facilities.) What is happening is that the power of newcomers to simply achieve their political goals in the community can happen practically

overnight while organizations like the Puerto Rican Agenda take decades to accomplish the same. This is why when some Puerto Rican residents of Humboldt Park look at these new bike lanes and construction projects in the Park, they only see the signs of gentrification and not the opportunity of accessing better amenities.

A Year and a Half of Trump

Yulian Herrera and Sandra Brito

Editorial Note: Parts of this article have been translated from Spanish.

Ever since Trump took his 2nd term as a president people are starting to realize that it was a mistake to vote for him again. Trump announced that he was going to deploy ICE and target hispanic people with criminal records but instead he started deporting people based on how they look and their race. Everything felt unfair because they would use force and violate

people's rights and they weren't doing things the right way. They were just abusing their power and regardless of what people see they still agreed that it was a good idea to deport immigrants when they are also deporting people who are working in construction sites. Anything based on what hispanic people would do that's where ICE targets.

In an interview with another student at our school, Gerardo, and he said that while he was at school, his dad got taken by ICE and his dad was just going to the store and he told me his dad was targeted because of the way he looked and dressed. He really felt down because he was their only support of the family. Also when ICE was going around trying to deport immigrants a lot of people were against it. But when they were trying to stop ICE from going into communities and neighborhoods, people tried to move in the way to



Protesters at a No Kings rally wearing masks to protect their identities from government surveillance and goggles and helmets to protect themselves from “non-lethal” crowd control measures (rubber bullets and mace).

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stop ICE but which they are allowed to move them out of the way. But when they were peacefully protesting, ICE took it too far and started using as much as force as they could and people viewed it as abuse of power so that's when people started protesting all around US because of many victims who been either injured or killed by ICE.

For example, Alex Pretti. DHS claims that he was trying to kill multiple ICE agents because they found a gun on him. But there was footage and it doesn't seem like he was trying to mass kill ICE agents when he was recording. He could've done it, too, because he also had a loaded gun on him but it never showed he was gonna use it and they started shooting at him too AFTER they removed the loaded gun on him. Another victim is Rene Good. She got shot by an ICE agent claiming that Rene was trying to run over an ICE agent. But when you can see the video and check closely you can see she's trying to move away from the ICE agent but the agent who shot her seemed like he was trying to get in front of a car to try to justify this killing. It's still unsolved till this day but it's clear that ICE was abusing his power.

Ever since Trump got into his

2nd term everything has not been going as planned as he says he's doing that exact opposite. When he claims he's gonna do something good for the country like getting into a war that had nothing to do with us, and Israel got the US involved. And now a lot of US citizens are struggling like gas prices, everything is getting expensive now, and they cut healthcare just to fund the Iran war and its \$200 billion, which is crazy. All over a war that has nothing to do with United States and also every administration doesn't even look like they can run office. Everything just seems so corrupt and we still haven't tried to do something to make this all change and make everything into a better place instead of doing unnecessary stuff that's most likely affecting all of us, especially the people who are struggling.

What the government is doing is not right. Everyone is suffering, and there is war as well, many things are going wrong under this administration. Meanwhile, Trump claims that the country will be fine thanks to him, yet he is actually damaging the nation economically. He says, "I am not a king; there is no king," but judging by his actions, he is no good; he now interferes with every

other country solely to serve his own needs.

For instance, I will not participate in demonstrations, because the authorities have my name and all my details on file. If they spot me, they will throw me in jail; when the government granted me entry into this country, they warned me that if I ever acted against the government, I would be deported. I could, however, go out and protest—provided I wore a hat, a face mask, and similar gear to conceal my identity.

During Trump's presidency, he took actions that negatively impacted many schools; consequently, many students now live in fear of attending school to pursue their education. Schools—including the Albizu Campos campus—faced cuts to their funding and support. However, the situation here in our "sanctuary" community remains relatively calm—partly because Chicago is a designated sanctuary city—and it is simply inconceivable that authorities would ever completely cease providing aid to schools, as such a scenario would be utterly impossible. This is how migration issues play out for people living on the streets—which is why students no longer want to go to school.

Education

Miseducation

Connell Lamb

Waking up at 6:45 am to get ready to attend John Hay Community Academy was no big deal for me as a kid as I was 7-13 years old. I had plenty of friends and resources and also no critical thinking to worry about. By 7:45 school is now in session and all students from your class are in one class for an entire school day. Being in school for an entire school year with the same people was easy for me mentally, physically and also emotionally. These were kids from my community I lived in and we knew each other well, as if we were close siblings. After any altercations in school we would simply have a talk and go back to our regular programmed schedule, which never gave the students a chance to rival within the breaks between classes. Which was kind of an issue because we were basically forced to sit in a room with people you didn't really want to be around during the time of the issue.

During class there were misaligned and outdated concepts of school work children were obligated to complete and know by a certain point in time. Some of this work includes long 3-5 page essays and also the closed note memorization tests. These were complex assignments assigned by cps to get the students to work longer in class and have a sharp memory. I felt like the reason for these complex assignments early in the morning was to

keep us off the "streets" of "our community". By the time middle school came around most students didn't remember nor attempted to understand some of the concepts that were taught months ago. Learning a tough concept in class for a couple of weeks got the students set on what to do and how to do it but when coming back after a fun and wild three month summer break, some would forget and also try to forget those concepts as they were mentally and physically draining. Students had a lot to endure and take in with short time to work with. We also had certain things said about us about not finishing on time or not being done when the others are. A thing some teachers would say was "you're too old to be stuck on one assignment" (I was 8-9). After we made it back they still had students do the same topics to see if we remember. Almost as if they don't want us to learn real world issues like what is going on with inflation inside of stores that we need to get the things to survive and be comfortable in today's society and the rise of gasoline prices that we need to get around to make the money and get the proper care for ourselves to survive. These topics help us survive by updating us more on real world issues that are floating over our heads that we would know about until a certain point in time in school. These topics also help by preparing us for the real world scenarios that children are placed in everyday around the world just no one knows until it

reaches a certain family who cares more than the school system.

Having seen how the movies and shows replicate what high school is like, I can say now that I've been at one that it's not even close. They operate under the ideology that education is a dramatic and artistic expression of the students. A high schoolers day consists of a start of 8:15 through 3:00 depending on what time your school starts and ends. Then you get a 5 minute break or more between classes to get whatever you need for the day to accomplish your goals. By 8:30 school is now in session and the teacher is explaining what needs to be done and when, also how to succeed and not get stuck and be behind in the curriculum. During the day there may be conflicts, good times, bad times and also sad times but rarely highly romanticized 10-20 minute kissing sessions at a locker as displayed in the media given the 5 minutes we had to get our books and get to class. The media also portrays the school system by making unattainable standards of student academic and social perfection. As seen in movies or Tv shows they often show the students having to ace an exam just to get into an elite university to become popular and more. In real world situations students have to put all their effort and push themselves beyond their limits to achieve such academic status they are portraying. Students face even more pressure that the media doesn't show like the mental, emotional, and the

physical state that the students deal with inside of the schools. As a student who has been in 1 elementary school and 2 high schools I can say being in class with 20 or more students back to back creates a big toll on your mental health. This creates a window for students to see the same people everyday creating a lack of social development meaning it would be hard for them to learn new things from different people and disable them from building a broader community. I feel that as a student in the school system we need an education built on having mental and financial freedom and not to be held because of academic standings. School was once a learning space for people to socialize, have fun, and grow as a person. Looking back I realized school was not a safe and fun environment, it was a mentally draining environment that disconnected me from reality. Students are forced to seek the truth of the harsh realities of the world on their own outside of school because the system refuses to adapt to what's goin' on. Schools should identify the issue of what's going on to reduce the mentality of students in the school system.

Why Small Schools are Better

Alisha Hernandez

Small schools are a better option for students than large schools. Why? There is no doubt that smaller schools offer better opportunities for academic, social, and emotional support. Students can build stronger relationships with their teachers and staff, receive

more one-on-one attention, and feel more supported in their education. Because of these benefits, smaller schools can create a more positive environment that helps students succeed both inside and outside of the classroom.

Some people believe larger schools are better because they offer more sports, clubs, advanced classes, and extracurricular activities. Larger schools may also have bigger campuses and more resources available to students. However, these opportunities do not always benefit students if they do not feel supported academically or emotionally. Many students in larger schools can feel overwhelmed or unnoticed because of the large student population. Smaller schools may not offer as many programs, but they provide stronger relationships, guidance, and support systems that help students succeed both personally and academically. Despite these opportunities, larger schools often struggle to provide the level of support many students need to succeed.

A common issue found in bigger schools is that many students see dropping out as their only option after deciding that life is not easy in school. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S high school dropout rate for 16-24 year olds was about 5.1 % in 2021. This shows that many students across the country continue struggling in school. An article by Education Week, "Chicago Teen Goes From Dropout to Top Student," supports the idea that smaller schools help students suc-

ceed. In the article, Andrew Delgado went from being a high school dropout at sixteen years old to becoming one of the top students in his class after attending our school. At the time, had around 150 students enrolled, making it much easier for teachers to build stronger relationships with students and give them more opportunities. The article itself explains how Albizu Campos High School provided mentoring, parenting classes, child care services, and family support programs to help students stay in school and improve their lives. Andrew stated, "There is a lot of help to get you there," showing how much support the school provided for students who were struggling.

Small schools help solve this issue by creating strong support systems for students. In the article, Andrew Delgado attended Albizu Campos, a school with about 150 students enrolled. Because of the smaller environment, teachers and staff were able to build closer relationships with the students and provide more personalized attention. This shows how much support the school provided.

In my personal experience, attending a bigger school was not the best fit for me. It was not necessarily the school itself, but because I have ADHD, being surrounded by large crowds made it difficult for me to concentrate, stay motivated, and focus on my goals. Students with ADHD or other learning difficulties can especially benefit from smaller schools because smaller classrooms often have fewer distractions. In large schools, crowded

hallways and loud classrooms can make it harder for students to stay focused throughout the day. Teachers in smaller schools are also more likely to notice when a student is struggling and provide extra help before they fall behind. This type of support can improve confidence and motivation for students who might otherwise feel discouraged.

For example, at my old school, Steinmetz, I used to skip classes, avoid doing my work, hang out with the wrong crowd, and often arrive late. One reason I did not change my behavior earlier was because I did not receive enough support or guidance to help me understand and work through my challenges. After switching schools, I realized how much of a difference support can make. The mentors, friends, and opportunities I have now help me stay focused and motivated. I feel that if I had received the same level of support at my previous school, I may not have needed to switch schools.

Smaller schools create a more supportive environment because teachers and staff can pay closer attention to students' individual

needs. In my new school, people notice when I am struggling and try to help me improve instead of letting me fall behind. That support has helped me become more responsible, focused, and motivated about my future.

Academic support is another reason smaller schools are better than larger schools. In smaller schools, teachers are more aware of student progress and can quickly notice when someone is struggling academically. Students are able to receive more one-on-one help and feel more comfortable asking for help in class. For students like me who struggle with concentration, smaller class sizes and quieter environments make it easier to stay focused and complete work. Instead of getting lost in large crowds, students are able to receive individualized attention that helps them improve academically. Smaller schools also encourage stronger communication between students and teachers, which can increase motivation and classroom participation.

Smaller schools also provide stronger social and emotional support for students. In the article, one student explained that, "For the

first time in my life, I got to know my teachers." This quote demonstrates how smaller schools allow students to feel connected to adults in school. When students feel connected, they are more likely to ask for help, stay motivated, and make better decisions. Smaller schools can also create a safer and more comfortable environment where students feel seen and supported instead of ignored. Social and emotional support is important because when students feel cared for, they are more likely to succeed academically and personally.

Overall, smaller schools are better at providing support because they allow students to build stronger relationships, receive more guidance, and stay focused on their goals. My own experience and the experiences shared in the article show how important support systems are for students who struggle in larger school environments. While larger schools may offer more programs or activities, smaller schools often provide the personal attention and encouragement students need to truly succeed.

Behavioral Hospitals

The Youth Prison System You Probably Didn't Know About

Ja'Lesa Neal, Jeremiah Robinson, Ash Fernandez, Naviel Vann, Willow Watson, Maricela Hernandez, Kayden Santana, Trey Harris, and Jae Johnson

When we was deciding on what to write for our article, we was talking about mental health, and we found out one of our fellow classmates got committed at Hartgrove Behavioral Hospital just because her and her mom would get into it a lot or just for fighting at school. Then we found out two other classmates had also went to Hartgrove, one of them also went because of arguing with their parent and fighting with their parent because she feel unheard and misunderstood. As we kept talking about this issue with other students, we found out, through a survey of 66 (out of 160) students at Albizu Campos High School, that one in five students have been committed at Hartgrove or other behavioral hospitals, many more than once. Basically, moral of the story, these teens have parents that call the police on them because they are "acting out." All they want is to be heard, understood, and be in a safe space! In theory, behavioral hospitals are meant to help individuals struggling with mental illness, emotional distress, trauma, and behavioral disorders. These types of facilities such as Hartgrove are supposedly designed to help support young kids/teens through their mental issues and imbalances.

They are supposed to provide treatment, therapy, and protection for these struggling teens during mental health crises. However, many former patients feel differently about the care they've gotten, they also raised a big concern on if these facilities are helping vulnerable children or not. This article will cover a lot of what we learned about behavioral hospitals by talking through our shared experiences.

How do young people end up at behavioral hospitals?

Parents

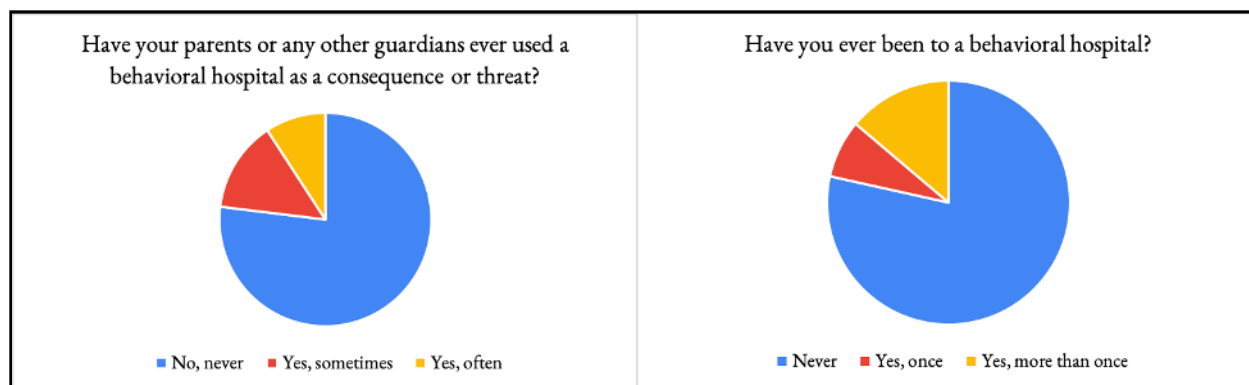
"I was admitted to Hartgrove because I had threw a table at my mom. I was broken because like I didn't want to hurt my mom but like at the time I was just really mad. Right before I was admitted for the first time, I had my best friend named TJ, who I used to hoop with a lot all the time-that was before my mental health. But like once I discovered I had mental health at the age of six, that's when everything started to change for me. I just felt more upset and angrier because I felt like there was certain stuff that I couldn't do because of my mental health and a lot of people made me feel bad about myself and I put myself down. I would cut myself, do all types of stuff. The first time I went to a behavioral hospital, I was six. But I've been admitted all throughout my life, like 80 times. Every time I went to a behavioral hospital was because of my mom. She was like, 'You're going to Hartgrove. I'm call-

ing 911. 'Like she would throw that in my face all the time even when I was in trouble, she'd be like 'You're going to hospital, it's over.' I would get so mad, like I wanted so bad just to kill myself. Literally. In my eyes, I felt like she didn't want me bad enough, and she kept giving me up to the hospital because she didn't understand what I was going through, and all I wanted growing up was a mother that understood what I was going through. And I would try to talk to her but she will always make me the problem, and she would always make me apologize to other people even when it wasn't my fault. That would get me heated and that would get me hot, so I went to the hospital for that."

"I did not choose to ever go to Hartgrove. Not none of the times I went there. I never chose to go there. Every time I went there, I had gotten in trouble with my mom. The first time I actually went there was a different reason. But every other time after that was for getting in trouble with my mom. Me and my mom get into these arguments where she wants to call the police. And she's crazy with me. And she already knows I got mood disorders. So it's like you just making it worse by just sitting right here provoking me and stuff. Like, what's up? You know?"

"I was admitted to Hartgrove for fighting a girl at school, and when I left I was ready to be back fighting. That was my whole life. When I was admitted to Hartgrove, I felt... I don't want to say scared, but like... shocked. Like, what is going on here?"

Albizu Campos Speaks!



Data from a survey of 66 students at PACHS.

I was also sad because I was away from home for three days. You know how you get in trouble and you have all of those thoughts like, why did I do this? I wish I never did it. Things like that. I was just really, really emotional. You know, because I legitimately could not believe that my mom was dropping me off. And I was mostly angry because my mom was the reason that I went. My brother still threatens me with Hartgrove because he knows I never want to go back. But like, in a playful way."

"My mom sent me to the hospitals a lot. All the time. That was her go-to. When I was old enough to where she couldn't really beat me anymore, and my dad was kind of in and out the picture. And my grandma had kicked me out. So her source of figuring out to punish me was sending me to a hospital. If we was into it, 'Boy, I'll send yo' ass to the hospital, woo.' Or really, she would just call the cops on me all the time. But she didn't understand how the law worked. She thought because I had a case on me, anytime she'll say something that they'll just take me to jail. But reality is they can't just send you to jail for no reason. They could put

you in the hospital for no reason though. So she learned, through that, that if she wants to, she can send me to the hospital. And there was nothing I can really do about it. But I used to get sent out cause I was just fighting a lot. I was going to a white school. So you know how white people are when you do anything that's not normal to them, you're crazy. So she would talk to the white folks at school and they'd be like, 'Oh, he's crazy. You need to put him in the hospital. And so she would just start doing that."

When talking about the paths that lead up to children being committed into Hartgrove and other behavioral hospitals, parents play a major role. According to our survey, 77% of students who have been committed at a behavioral hospital were committed at some point by a parent. We also found that of the 23% of all students surveyed who said their parents used behavioral hospitals as a threat, 60% actually were sent to behavioral hospitals by their parents at some point. Behavioral hospitals function as an alternative to school and other child care. The support and love of parents are a crucial influence on

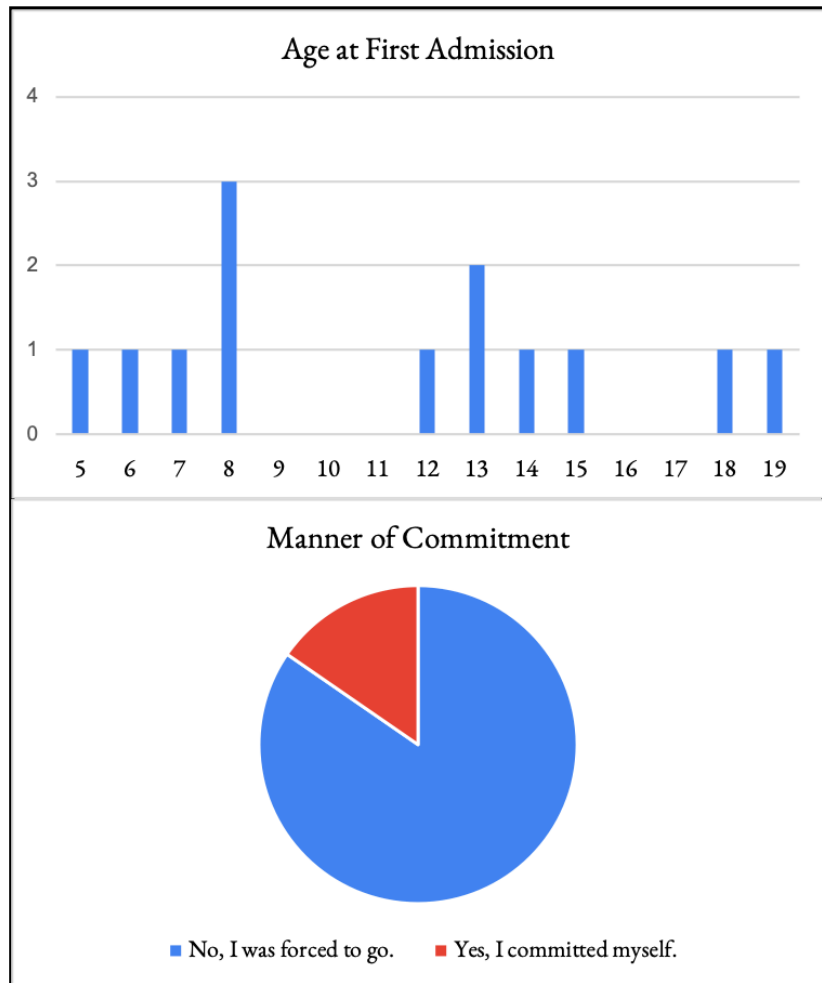
whether such intervention is needed. Parental involvement plays an important role in shaping the way children behave in life and at school. Parents have control over their children's behavior, development, and academic performance. Parental involvement is not only taking care of a child, but also the way they show up with homework, showing up at school events, going to teacher conferences, setting ground rules, and showing emotional support. When parents are active and supportive, children often do well in school, perform highly academically, and become more responsible. The moment parents are not actively showing up or are too strict, children begin to struggle with behavior in and outside of school.

One significant factor is the academic support from parents at home. Most children aren't receiving the proper help with schoolwork because the parents are stressed out, too busy, or don't have the proper resources. Throughout time, children begin to fall behind, making it challenging for them to stay on track, which can lead to frustration, loss of interest in

school, or even behavior issues. When problems begin to increase and become dangerous, students are often placed in a structured environment like Hartgrove.

Behavior is another significant area. Children's actions as they develop are mainly based on what they've seen when they were younger. If parents are too strict, children become what parents call "sneaky." They're unlikely to learn proper rules, boundaries, and manners because they just learn how to get away with doing bad things. Both issues can lead to behavior issues in school, which will cause school replacement (alternative schools or behavioral hospitals). The conversation between parents and other adults who take care of their children is tremendously important. Parents who keep a good communication system between school and hospital staff and parents decrease the amount of negative performance in school, while a child whose parent isn't as active will have a high chance of performing negatively. However, sometimes parents are overwhelmed, stressed, or just too busy to communicate. This is the common cause of misbehavior like bad grades or low academic performance, which gets overlooked until it's almost too late to fix things. This brings alarming awareness of children being placed in a different environment or school setting.

Financial struggles and life problems play a critical role in how active parents are in their children's lives. Families who are facing financial struggles or being overworked

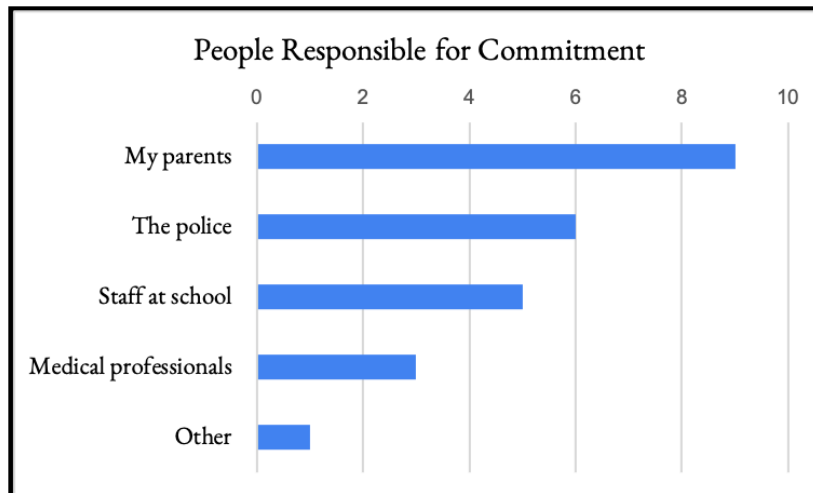


Data from a survey of 66 students, only including those who reported that they had been committed at a behavioral hospital.

genuinely don't have enough time to help children. This doesn't mean they don't care about their children; sometimes, it is genuinely just about time management. These struggles often affect the way children perform in school academically and emotionally. Emotional support plays another crucial role in shaping the way children behave and perform in school. Children who feel loved and supported at home are more commonly able to control stressful moments in their lives in a healthy way, while children who don't feel supported at home are more commonly able to

act out of control to seek attention. These actions often lead to problems outside of the home, which leads to disciplinary actions.

It is crucial to know that being too involved in a child's life can cause chronic stress. Being too controlling over a child's life is not the best idea. Children who face these problems at home often end up with anxiety or depression, which causes a withdrawal from school. Good parental involvement is having a mix of set boundaries, encouragement, and clear expectations of what's expected in and outside of the home. Parents aren't all we have



Data from a survey of 66 students, only including those who reported that they had been committed at a behavioral hospital.

to blame. Children's paths aren't just made in the home; school, after-school activities, and sports all play a part in the way they are shaped and developed as they age. You never know what children experience outside of each environment. In this case, schools may not have enough resources to give to children when they're facing a hard time, an emotional time, or a break in general. Rules and policies inside the environment can also affect some students more than others, which triggers the way children behave, so parental involvement just plays a bigger role in children's lives. There are ways to improve this: for example, some centers should offer training classes for parents with children who deal with anger management, anxiety, or depression. These programs can help give the proper support to their children. Schools can also make it much easier on parents by having more welcoming staff, making parents feel comfortable. When parents and staff come together and show actual care for children, that

child is more likely to succeed in life.

Parental involvement has a strong impact on children's lives. An active, supportive, and understanding parent in the household can help prevent a child from acting out of character and performing poorly academically. However, an uninvolved parent in a household can lead to challenges in a child's emotional development, causing a replacement like Hartgrove. By building a community between families and schools, students can help succeed in both academic and personal aspects of life, without relying on a replacement for Hartgrove.

Police

"When I was 15, I had a case pending already. So me and my mom, we used to always get into it. So she used to call the cops on me because if they came and got me, that would violate my court supervision, because I was still fighting my case. So she called the cops on me one day for real, and I got gone. I was scared. So I was in Westchester. She lived in

like Hillside. I was walking around, it was nighttime. And I just see a cop cruiser roll past me. He looked at me. He knew my name and everything. And I didn't know what to say. I ain't gonna lie, I was running on the shopping cart. So I was like, I just hope he ain't clock like who I was. But the moment he hit that U on me, it was like a movie. All you've seen was lights from everywhere. It was like they was posted behind the corner where I was finna walk at. I'm talking the whole street. They shut down the entire, it was like what, Wolf Road? Something like that. The whole skreet was shut down. It was easily like 15 cop cars, no exaggeration. You would have thought I had committed a bank robbery or something. I was so confused on why there was so many cops. I'm thinking that something else happened, because there was so many cops out there. Boy, they all hopped out on me, and there's like 20 of them, and it's just me. And I'm just like, bruh. I was 15. I was 15. I was so confused. They grabbed me, they took me. I'm thinking I'm gonna go back to jail. They just took me to a hospital, though. They put me in an ambulance. And they were like, 'Oh, you gotta go to a hospital,' or whatever. I was like, 'What y'all need all these cops for if it's just that? Like, what y'all doing, bro?' You know what I'm saying? I was like, 'Y'all intimidated because I'm black?' I said that for real, too. And they took me, put me in the hospital, whatever. And they had police watching me, like 24-7 surveillance for like five days while I was there in the emergency room. So the cop was just staring at

me, watching me. No privacy, nothing. Talked down on me like I wasn't anything. And then I got booted to Streamwood."

"One day my mom and I got into a heated argument. She continued coming into my room yelling and walking up on me saying hurtful things. Because the argument got heated the police got involved, and when the police arrived, they talked to me first. They allowed me to get ready and lied to me that they would take me to the Apple Store to get my phone fixed. So they threw some clothes at me to put on, I refused to put them on and told them I'd pick my own clothes. I believe they got tired of waiting on me. I then tried to get back into my room. As I was heading out the bathroom the police attacked me and put handcuffs on me. They then grabbed me by my wrist, arms, legs, and ankles, and carried me down the stairs to a stretcher and carried me down the stairs."

"I'm looking at the police, I'm like you're not about to touch me, on my life. They get to taking me out the building. I started swinging, my arms kicking, punching, everything. Soon as that happened they grabbed my arm and put me in handcuffs, I started crying my eyes out. They were driving me out of my home. Because you feel attacked right in that moment when you're having the mental health crisis like if you're in a crisis mode."

"You're not thinking straight. Like you're fight or flight so if somebody puts their hands on you while you're in a crisis zone you immediately start fighting back because you

don't know what's going on. Especially like if you have trauma with people touching you, in crisis mode you're going to be 10 times worse you're going to be screaming, kicking, crying, saying 'don't touch me,' and then they're like restraining you literally they had my wrist in front of me all that they restrained you exactly they had my wrist in front of me. When I was 8 years old, I was having a mental crisis and my mom called the police to try calming me down. The police were about to try to restrain me and my mom was like, 'don't touch her, can't you see she's having a crisis?' But the police officer tried touching me anyway and I threw a rock at him, so they charged me with aggravated battery against a police officer at the age of 8 years old. When we went to court the judge dismissed the case because he said it was crazy to charge an 8 year old girl with aggravated battery and that my mom was telling the officer not to touch me."

Another major factor in being involuntarily committed is the police. According to the survey of students at Albizu Campos, a little over half of the students who were involuntarily committed were committed by the police at least once. A lot of cops are lazy bald-headed scumbags. When they arrest you, and they don't have a real reason to arrest you, or that they will not be able to convict you either because you will be able to beat the case or because they were on bullshit to begin with, they will lock you up in the emergency room because there is no real due process in the hospital. The moment they

put you in there, the nurses go by who has the higher say-so. They say even if you did nothing wrong, if your parent says you did something wrong, that is enough to commit you on the hospital's end. The police also fully understand this, so the nurse will automatically take the word of the police who has a high level of authority. This allows them to eliminate the need for a judge who might order your release from a criminal detention center, like Cook County or JTDC (the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center). Hospitals typically will hold you around a week to a week and a half, which is not a huge amount of time, but it is still time you lost from your life. The cops don't care how you are punished, but they want you punished, because it fits their ego. All the public services are connected with each other and cover for each other, whether they are nurses, doctors, police, firefighters, paramedics, social workers or other first responders. They all have a mutual agreement. It is like a family dynamic where if you ask your parent (the judge) for something, they might say no, but if you ask your older brother or sister (other public servants) they will be more flexible with the rules.

Basically, when a cop is going to charge you with a crime, you need to give them reasonable suspicion to stop you. But more than half the time, they can provoke you into giving them a reason to arrest you. They'll say, "I know you, you from here or there, I know you have guns on you." They are going to bother

you and if you try to stand your ground, you are going to get arrested for disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, or just for no reason, and then they will just leave you in the cop car. They might even pick you up to drop you off in your opps' hood. They make the handcuffs too tight and throw you in the most uncomfortable back seat of their car. Then they will laugh at you when you struggle. They are professional agitators. They know how to just provoke you. After they arrest you, they type into their stupid computer to see if you have any record or are a gang member, and they will throw anything they find in your face. Then they will take you to the station, where they can hold you for 48 hours without charging you (at least if they are following the law).

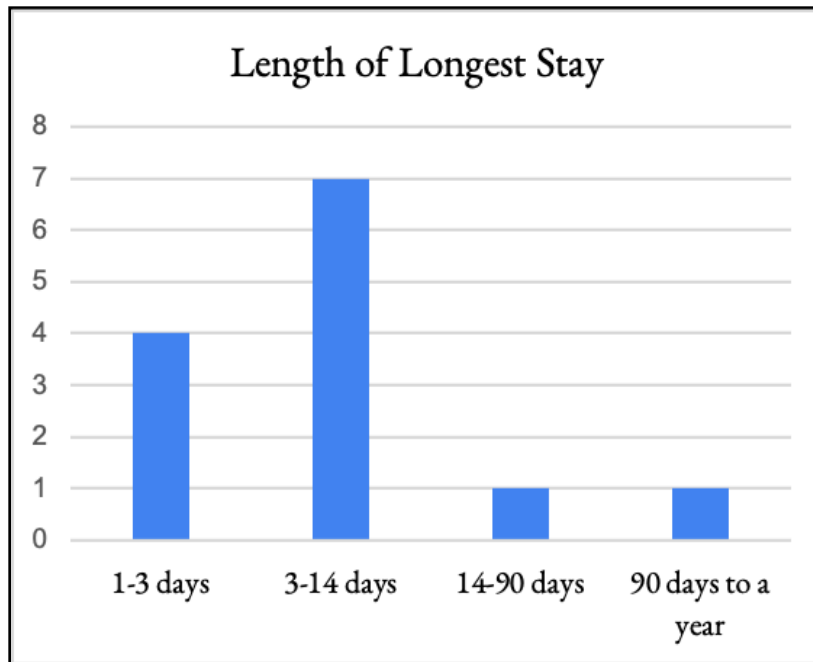
At this point, they need to have evidence or they need to do paperwork in order to continue the process, at which point they will send you in front of a judge. If they don't have enough evidence, then their next option is to send you to their "brother" at the hospital. They give you a choice: you can either "voluntarily" choose to commit yourself or they will involuntarily commit you. To start the commitment process, the cops need to show that you are a "clear and present danger" to yourself or others. This means that a psychiatrist, medical professional, cop, school official, or "qualified examiner" determines that you "communicate a serious threat of physical violence," "pose a clear and imminent risk of serious physical in-

jury" or "demonstrate threatening physical or verbal behavior, such as violent, suicidal, or assaultive threats, actions, or other behavior" against yourself or another person. It could be as little as an argument or simple words exchanged with someone, since the police have a lot of leeway to define what counts as "threatening verbal behavior." They surveil you and make you uncomfortable by chaining you to your bed, and don't let you have a moment of privacy. Any shit-talking you direct towards the police might be interpreted as a threat, even if you are just insulting them. Even if you are just not kissing up to them or not treating them like they're your master. They will say things to you to provoke you by being racist and imply things about you, using microaggressions, passive aggressiveness, and sneak disses, where you know they are on something, but you can't really react without looking crazy. They will poke and prod at you until you blow up on them.

The numbers show that Chicago Police have been using involuntary commitment more and more as a strategy for getting around the normal criminal legal system. According to MindSite News, there was a 30% increase in involuntary admissions by the police between 2023 and 2024, 20% of mental health calls to the police resulted in involuntary commitment, and "involuntary commitment has become the 'default' response to mental health crises in Illinois [...]. For patients, it mirrors incarceration; for police, it's similar to an ar-

rest—without the necessity of a crime." According to our student survey, slightly less than half of the students who were involuntarily committed by the police were actually charged with crime at the end of the day.

Once they determine that you are a "clear and present danger," then they can automatically hold you for 24 hours. Then psychiatrists or other qualified examiners have the power to determine whether you should be held longer, or if you can leave. The doctors have a lot of power to determine whether you should stay or not, and can hold you for non-medical reasons, like if you don't have a parent to receive you at home. A judge has to review the petition for your admission, but no one tells you that this is happening and you don't automatically get to be a part of the hearing. Allegedly, you (if you are at least 12) or your parent or guardian can object to your commitment, at which point you will get a hearing, a lawyer, a jury, and the right to be present at the hearing, but they don't read you your rights and so you will not know about it unless you go out of your way to find out about this. If they can keep getting the judge to approve the extension of your commitment, then they can hold you indefinitely. It is not common to be held more than a couple weeks; anything longer is what we would call a "life sentence." The main exception is if they want to transfer you to a residential home which is operated by DCFS, because then your "guardian" is a nazi social



Data from a survey of 66 students, only including those who reported that they had been committed at a behavioral hospital.

worker who has a little higher level of authority than these other agencies. They are like the “grandparent” of the police who you go to when you need something.

The Larger System

“Before all of this, when I had initially got arrested for my case, the cops came and got me. I sat in jail. I didn’t even really sit in jail with them. I sat in there for the full day, night, and then they let me go. I was just on court supervision. The original deal was I was gonna fight my case from home and go from there. Then they sent me to the hospital a couple of months after all that. They kept me 90 days cause, in my personal situation, my mom gave up her rights with me two weeks in and she blocked my grandparents from picking me up. When they did that, it forced the state to take over. DCFS [Department of Children and Family Services] took over, they held me.

And the reason they held me so long from what their words was, “Well, cause you have a pending case,” and they kept using this against me. I was not found guilty at the time, nothing. I just had this case going. They kept telling me I’m a violent offender and they would throw the details of my case in my face. And they used that to the state to justify holding me. Cause they would have meetings and they said, “Look, he has aggravated assault,” but they’ll speak as if I was guilty. And then they were like, “You’re a violent felon. So we cannot just let you leave. We cannot just put you anywhere.” Hence, they kept me an additional three months when I was supposed to go home after 14 days. And they sent me to East St. Louis in the residential homes, one of the worst residential homes in the state. What other kids in there went for rape, robbery, attempted murder. They sent me in

there and I wasn’t even found guilty. They just kept telling me I was violent. I was at the residential home for another seven months. I went away at 15 and a half ish. I came home at 16 and a half. There was a lady there, I forget her actual real name. But we used to jokingly call her ‘master.’ And the reason we would do that was because the facility was on the land of the Cahokia people. So it was on slaughtered Native territory. And the facility, if you drove past it, it looked weird. It was just a building on just straight fields. Fields, trees, really are hospitable lands. Like it was just a oddly-placed building. And it was just in nature. And the facility in itself was mainly of black residents, mainly black people are in there, from the ages of 12 to 21. It was mainly black people, whether you were sentenced there or came from a hospital, most of the people that were in there were sentenced there. And then you had the small percentage of white kids in there who all are in there for weird sex crimes and incest. So majority of all the people in there were black and everybody in there was held for a really long time. Like I knew one kid who got caught smoking weed, like one time. He spent almost two years in there. And the lady herself will rarely show her face, but she was extremely rich. Like she was wealthy and she was solely wealthy off the fact that she owned this facility of all of us in there. And I forget, because the staff told us how much money we were worth, I forget exactly how much they told us, but each of us individually we were worth a good amount of money. So that was the

story of why we call her 'master.' She was essentially a new age slave master. Meanwhile in court, they literally had to explain to the judge why I was in East St. Louis and not with my mom. Because my judge did not give permission for any of this to happen. But I feel like, ironically, by me being down in East St. Louis and being basically out of society for like seven months, I feel like it made sense in the judge's eyes- because you know, when they explain it to other people, they say, 'Oh, he's getting help.' They don't say, 'Oh no, we're just holding them in a single room, like jail, but it's just a hospital. And he's staring at the wall 24-7.' They was telling them, 'Oh, he's there getting help,' or whatever. So I feel like that made the defense attorneys and the prosecutors feel more lenient. Because I had a very serious case. And the fact that the judge told me that once I come home from there, I can just do a probation at my grandma's house. I feel like that tremendously helped my case."

This whole system is connected and motivated by profits. The police pass you off to their "brother" the hospital, who pass you off to the "weird uncle," the residential homes and the "grandfather," DCFS, who controls everything. All these agencies get money from the government based on the number of young people who are in the system, whether it is behavioral hospitals, DCFS, or residential homes. According to an article by WTTW, "a new class-action lawsuit [is] accus[ing] DCFS of 'warehousing' children inside psychiatric hospitals, keeping them in

doors almost around the clock and depriving them of a proper education and contact with their families, because they don't have appropriate placements to move them." They can ping pong you back and forth holding you longer and longer so that they keep getting paid. All of this disproportionately targets Black and Brown youths. Children are learning that they should not trust these resources that are supposed to help them, like nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, or educators who are mandated to report students' families to DCFS. And all of this is making profits for these agencies that have no oversight. According to MindSite news, involuntary commitment "pushes people into a largely untracked system that can leave the person in crisis traumatized and unwilling to seek further treatment, or further cycling in and out of forced treatment and jails. No state body tracks information about initial forced hospitalizations, hearing processes or outcomes." With all this said, we can see that the reasons why young people are ending up in these institutions has more to do with making money off them than it does with anything they did wrong or trying to help them.

Inside a Behavioral Hospital

"At Hartgrove we had to wake up at 8am sharp. Hygiene was from 8:30 to 9:00 and then we had breakfast from 9 to 9:45. After we eat breakfast is when the day would truly start. If you were not up by 9am you would lose your points, which also means you were gonna

miss group. So like, they'll try to wake you up, but like, if you don't wake up, then you're just gonna miss your points, which pushes your release date back. The majority of the time you would spend in the day room, where you spend most of the day and you are not allowed to leave since the door to your room is locked, and they will tell your doctor that you are non-compliant. Every hospital had a schedule for groups and school time. During school time, you would complete work sent to you by your school outside of the hospital, if they actually sent anything. If they didn't send you anything, then you just start falling behind. The other thing we would do is attend group therapy. It could be art or music therapy, it could be reacting to social scenarios. You have to respond the way they want you to, not what you actually would do. You can take good things away from group, but most of it is basically pointless. The activities are often designed to align with the amount of time that people are in the hospital. For those who are there for long periods of time, they will start doing the same activities over again. If you don't attend group, they take away your points, and you get your release date pushed back. If you don't go to groups, you don't go home, because that means you're not trying to help yourself get treatment. The majority of the day, you are either look at a wall, or watch TV with 25 other people at the same time. The entire time you are being monitored. And then, we go in our room at 5 for shift change. During that time frame, the whole staff would switch. You had to be in

your room. It was supposed to be 20 minutes, but it could go on for a long time. Then, we eat dinner. And then, we watch some more TV until bedtime. They could play music on the speakers. You could play cards, maybe dice a couple of times.”

“Some of the staff were perverts, some of them were friendly, some of them were nice, some of them were self-centered, some of them shouldn’t even been there at that job in my opinion. The environment, there was lots of dirty trifling girls there. So, it was hard. They was in their lying about rape. They was in their lying about being pregnant. They was in their lying about lots of things. One girl, she got out and tried to make me buy her an iPhone. Her and her foster parent. And it was like crazy. Like things that people, just their whole mindset be crazy to me. But it’s like you don’t never know. You really have to get to know a person in depth to know why they is the way they is. Then, to eat, we had pizza puffs. We had lots of potatoes. We had wings. They were hard wings though. They were very hard. Not that crunchy. We had lots of fruit. We had salad. Lots of salad. You know, and they made sure we were hydrated. You know, lots of water. Hard water. Not purified. If you are not behaving, they will take all of your clothing items that you have gotten and brought in there. They might even lose your clothing items. They will take strings out of your clothes, and your jogging pants. They will cut your hood off your hoodies. Just so you can’t wear them. It was crazy. I remember I was in scrubs one time because I don’t even re-

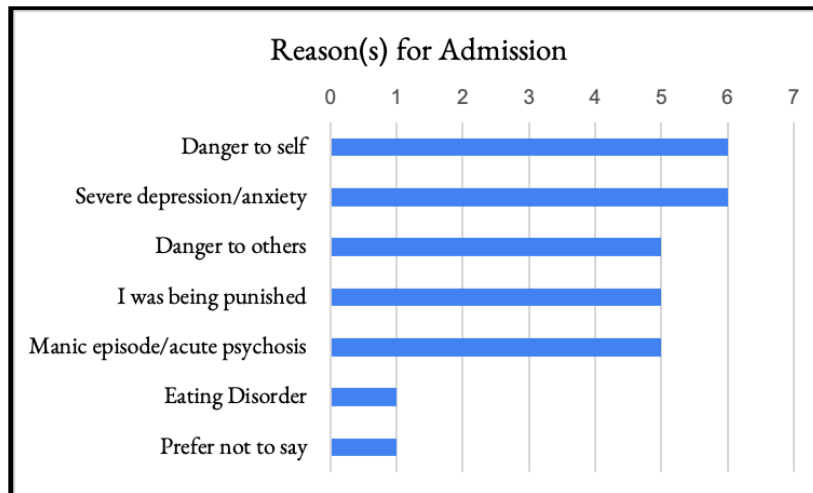
member why. I was just in scrubs. They took my clothes and put me in scrubs and they lost some of my clothing. Then I had very bad withdrawals from nicotine. And then like, the nicotine patches, the stickers that they would put on your arms inside the hospital, they would not work at all. So I would be in there crying, then happy, then crying, then going through it, then happy, then sad, then up, then down, and around town. It was just crazy. So as soon as I got out of there, every single time, as soon as I got out of the hospital, I went to go hit the vape. I went straight to it. I couldn’t wait to get to it. Because it’s just like, the withdrawals, it’s crazy.”

“At one hospital, some of the young people were in gangs. Some of them are wannabes and some people are really in it, meaning they were put in the hospitals by the cops for criminal charges. The alliances form on racial lines, Whites with Whites, Blacks with Blacks, and Hispanics with Hispanics. There was an unwritten rule that if you want to press an issue with someone of a different race, then everyone will get involved. However, sometimes kids could cross the race lines. Like there could be a Black person who joins the Hispanic group, or a Hispanic kid who joins the White group. But a lot of the time, people get sent from other places in Illinois, like East Saint Louis or Rockford. They would always group together based on where they came from that was even more important than gang affiliation. I usually hung with the Little Village kids. There were two kids from the same area whose sets

were at war with each other, but they still stood up for each other because they were from the same suburb. The elements of us being so displaced and then forced together into a small room makes us join up along the lines of the gangs and racial divisions they are punishing us for in the first place. That hospital had a lot of politics and structure, and I haven’t heard about that at other hospitals. But over three months, I saw all types of kids come. It’s not like prison where the way it is is the way that it is. We would always joke about what would happen when the next rotation came in. There would be a couple people coming in and out, but then there would be days where 11 or 12 new people would show up overnight. It just created a kind of environment where you never knew what was going to happen.”

Diagnosis

“I would say that most social workers and doctors at the behavioral hospitals are not helpful because they do not give their assigned patients the best support they can give them. I say it most because there were some that were helpful and would try their best to keep us posted on what our families were saying and how our cases were going. But most of the time they were avoidant towards the patients and would try to run away from us and ignore us. One thing I remember was that they would always tell the patients that our doctor and social workers are the ones who determine when we would be discharged, so I feel like that’s why they were feeling like escaping from us. But at the same time, this shows how unfair the patients were getting



Data from a survey of 66 students, only including those who reported that they had been committed at a behavioral hospital.

treated and how uncomfortable they were to be wanting to leave so bad. Because I remember how drained I was to feel this way as well. These whole experiences with the hospitals made me want to pursue my career in psychology because of all the things that I have been through and the people who I have met and the impact that their stories have had on my life and how I see things now. I saw how the hospitals were not helpful and even traumatized plenty of kids and made them worse."

"As far as diagnosis go, so when you get put into the hospital before you even get admitted to the actual hospital, because everybody starts off at the ER. Everybody. They're going to try to kind of fake "evaluate" you. The real evaluation is when you get sent to the actual hospital, but first they're trying to see where your mental state's at. And a lot of times they'll either find nothing or if you actually got something, they might find something, but those ask a bunch of questions and they'll go off that. Like for me personally, I just had a lot of anger problems. So

they would have trouble diagnosing me or anything because they, the nurses even would say, 'Well, he doesn't really have any problems. He just fights a lot.' Then I would get sent off to the hospital because they don't really need probable cause to send you to the hospital. You're going to get sent to the hospital regardless, as long as your mom says, or the cops say. When you get there, they have the real evaluation. A lot of times we come at 1am, 2am, and the evaluation process can be 30 minutes to an hour plus. They ask you a bunch of questions. Try to find out stuff about your life. And they kind of go off of this. They don't really say anything to you though. They just say, 'Go to bed.' Well, after that you wake up, there's a cart of medicine. They take your vitals and they give you medicine."

Hospitals say they are helping you by diagnosing you with a condition and then treating you for it. That is lies because you can't treat something that's not there. By their logic, your mom could get upset with you, and you end up in the

hospital, and to keep you there they need to diagnose you with something to "treat you" for what is ultimately just you disobeying authority. Therefore, the goal of treatment is to get you to comply. Compliance means release.

In order to control you and keep you at a hospital, you need to be diagnosed. This helps them make a case that you are a "clear and present danger" to yourself and others, and allows them to use practices like forcible medication without you or your parent's consent. In order to diagnose someone with a mental disorder, they need to rule out other medical causes of your behavior, and then line up your symptoms with the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (the DSM-5), usually by using a questionnaire from a qualified examiner like a psychiatrist.

But even the correct procedure to diagnose a patient is not "correct." In the way it's broken down and presented of how it's supposed to go but the results don't mean what they say they are supposed to mean. You can't diagnose someone in one week because it takes some time to actually fully understand and correctly diagnose someone and understand them. The symptoms listed down for many other disorders are vague, and could be applied to many depending on the situation. For example, according to the DSM-5, one of the diagnostic criteria for Bipolar I Disorder is having "[a] distinct period of abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood and

abnormally and persistently increased goal-directed activity or energy, lasting at least 1 week and present most of the day, nearly every day (or any duration if hospitalization is necessary).” Here you can see that if you are hospitalized then it becomes a lot easier to diagnose someone as bipolar if they are already in a behavioral hospital, when we have already seen that there are a lot of different reasons why someone might end up in there aside from being crazy. One of our authors described that he was diagnosed with “bipolar, ADHD oppositional defiant disorder, PTSD, anxiety, and depression,” all under these kinds of circumstances at various behavioral hospitals. Doctors and psychiatrists are supposed to rule out other disorders and causes for symptoms, however they don’t properly take the time to do this, especially when the causes are social, like disobedience to an authority figure who is abusing you. Because of how complex people’s behavior is, it seems basically impossible for someone to determine if a person has neurological issues based on meeting them a few times. Because most symptoms can be linked to a myriad of other conditions and social causes, it should realistically take a lot longer to figure out. Medical professionals use diagnosis too much to get more power over people who are in behavioral hospitals, or refuse to give a diagnosis in a context where it could benefit people and help them resist abuse. Especially when it comes to mental hospitals, they seem to be persistent in keeping

you there for as long as they can.

This could be for many reasons: to find a way to have control over people; money; or, as we know from history, to even use them for experiments. Many patients go through a lot of trial and error when being evaluated and prescribed medication, and there are many things doctors don’t fully understand themselves, so patients being kept in facilities solely for research doesn’t seem far-fetched. For the longest time, mental hospitals have been admitting people simply for not acting in a way that’s “appropriate.” In the 1950s, many women were hospitalized just because they didn’t obey their husband’s orders. During the same time period, Puerto Ricans who had anxiety attacks were being involuntarily committed and diagnosed with a mental disorder that was called “Puerto Rican Syndrome.” This still happens to this day, but they found a way to make it seem less bad, and it’s shown in different ways compared to before. The best examples for this are the multiple stories being told in this article; most—if not all—of them have experienced being hospitalized for misbehavior and/or defying their parents.

Medication

“The medication and shots are the main thing about behavioral hospitals but also one of the worst. In my opinion I feel like they make the kids worse and they’re fake. I feel like it’s all fake and not good for anyone because their whole system of trying to diagnose someone doesn’t make any sense. Everytime I’ve been to the

hospital they try to diagnose me with something and give me pills but I never understood how they can just tell someone they have something when they’ve only been there one week and not even actually having 1-to-1 conversations with me or even with me 24-7 to observe me. I would only see my doctor once a day in the morning and for like 5 minutes for a quick check in. They switch medications around like the patients are hamsters and try to see what would work on us. I have been diagnosed with bipolar, MDDD, anxiety, depression, and probably some other diagnosis. The hospital has a cycle and gets new patients every week and discharges the old ones with a made-up diagnosis. One time, it was like in a movie, I was up agitated, and they would sedate me and when I woke up, I would be agitated again like ‘where am I?’ and they would sedate me again, and they kept sedating me over and over.”

“The police took me to Loretta Hospital where I got treated even worse. The nurse lady started pinching me and put a mesh spit bag over my head even though I was still in restraints the entire time. They gave me a liquid that kids call ‘booty juice.’ They gave me three shots. One in my leg, and one in each of my arms. When I woke up they had people from Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS) come assess me. I remember telling them that I wasn’t homicidal or suicidal then going to sleep. When I woke up I was being thrown off a stretcher onto an assessment bench inside of Garfield Park Behavioral Hospital. After that I got taken upstairs. I was

still very tired from the medicine they gave me so I slept it off, but when I kept waking up I kept crying because of how sad and overwhelmed I felt from even being there. I also feel like all they over medicate a lot of patients causing side effects, seizures, etc. They do more harm than help. For me, they started giving me medication when I was 12. I remember having multiple seizures and feeling more depressed than I was before.”

“Everybody by default was taking the same medicine. I don’t remember the exact name of the medicine, but I remember because, when I was at Streamwood, there was kids in there who real life had schizophrenia, kids in there who real life had psychosis, and other kids who were simply there because they got into an argument with their mom or that officers sent them there, but we all were universally taking the same medicine. And we just always thought that was weird. And then they’ll tell you that they’re going to up your medicine or lower your medicine, that your mom gave them permission. They never contacted any of our parents about it. They had me for my anger, cause after about two weeks in there, I started getting some more fights in there. When I realized I wasn’t going home, I was like F it. So me and the other kids were fighting a lot. So they told me because my anger was so bad that they needed to get me high. So they gave me these pills. I don’t remember the names of these pills either, but it literally made you high. You would like nod off. Like you’ll be sitting one moment talking to somebody and the next minute you just start feeling

really dreamy, really like “swoozy.” I remember I was on these pills for like, I don’t even know how long. And I remember I couldn’t think. I did not have the ability to critically think anymore. I lived my life day by day. I couldn’t really think or process anything anymore until I cold-turkey stopped it. And I had terrible withdrawals for the week. But after that, I noticed immediately I was able to start thinking again and having more control over myself. But yeah, everybody was taking the same pills. No psychiatrists are really involved. So for example, I had all these diagnosis when I was in there, when I left, none of that was on my actual record and nothing was on my record of having anger problems. Nothing was on my record of rage symptoms, whatever they were saying, none of that was there. So that leads me to the conclusion that they was pretty much just giving us what they felt was fit. Cause I’ve been to real psychiatrists outside where when they do your diagnosis, that goes on your record. Anything in the hospital, all the medicine I took, none of that’s on my record.”

After you get a diagnosis, they can give you medication against your will if you are “gravely disabled or possess a likelihood of serious harm to self or others.” The medications that the people give you in the hospital are forced. Instead of properly treating patients’ conditions, staff would use a “chemical restraint” on patients. Where patients are being either held very tightly or put in restraints and given medication for them to be drowsy and easier to deal with.

Studies say that “enforced medication and heavy sedation are still commonly used in some facilities.” Patients at a psychiatric hospital were drugged and restrained without medical justification. Researchers have also said that these medications can cause side effects such as emotional numbness, confusion, and exhaustion. This can worsen a person’s mental health instead of helping it. One of our authors described how “they either dragged me to the quiet room, which is basically just a padded room, or my own room, and they pulled down my pants and my underwear and literally shot me in my ass. It was mainly because like me crying, me scratching my arm, and then they would consider that me being aggressive towards everybody, so then they would restrain me, which made it ten times worse.”

When the doctor finally assigns the patient a medication that they believe is the one they need they start giving them out. The time for meds would be in the morning when the patients would wake up and before bedtime as well. If you had a medication that is supposed to be given to you at a certain time the MHA workers or the nurse would come find you to take you by the nursing station to take them. Now, this is if your parents consented and if you’re willing too. Before giving out medication they will call the patient’s guardian and let them know they’ve been prescribed, and if it’s okay for them to give it to you, depending on what your guardian says as well, they

make you take the medication. But if you or your parent didn't consent, they had another strategy. The nurses are key agitators in restraining you and holding you down in order to get you to resist so that they can get you to relive a trauma and tweak or spazz, and they will then have reason to give you medication because you are a "clear and present threat." They gaslight you by making up lies, doing all types of stuff, just so they can give you meds.

Punishment

"Quiet room was like solitary confinement. If you got in trouble, they were going to put you in there. What it's intended to be used for was giving you a break or if things were too loud you could go there to calm down. They might put you in there for 5 minutes to a couple hours. They would also use the quiet room to give you booty juice. They put me in quiet room because I didn't want to sit on the ground. I'm a germaphobe like that. So I kneeled instead. And that's why they put me in there for that. But after that they just gave me a towel to sit on. If you were liked, you might not get punished that hard. They won't even give you shots for real if they liked you. I once fought a kid they didn't like and they gave me McDonalds for it."

"They put you in the quiet room if they have to keep repeating themselves, or if you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing, meaning, like going into other people's rooms, and just being disrespectful, talking violently, stuff like that. And how would they put you in the quiet room? They would pick you up

by your arms, and then they would take you to the quiet room, and they wouldn't, like, put you on the floor. If you tell them you want to walk, they do let you walk. So, if you tell them you want to walk. I'd be like, "don't touch me, I'm going to walk."

Abuse was one major problem in behavioral hospitals. These behavioral hospitals abused people in multiple ways, such as physical, verbal & emotional abuse. Many patients were in hospitals to get help because of their behaviors, but many patients were abused instead. One of our authors, Trey, described how "a lot of staff were just like cursing at the kids, being very disrespectful, acting like kids don't deserve respect. And I feel like to get respect you have to give it." Physical abuse is also a serious problem. Researchers have announced that they found over 92,000 incidents of people being restrained and left with emotional trauma and bruises in behavioral hospitals. Verbal abuse has also been clearly seen from the staff by the mocking, yelling, threatening and ignoring patients. Patients are already struggling emotionally so extra verbal mistreatment can lead to severe anxiety and depression. While searching through these articles, they've said that "only a small percent of violent or abusive incidents inside hospitals are officially documented. Researchers have argued that psychiatric facilities need stronger patient rights, protections, better staff training and more independent investigations into complaints."

Sexual Abuse

"I could not express how much I stopped trusting mental health staff members who said they were there to help, because of the sexual abuse I endured at Hartgrove and other mental facilities in general. This put a complete stop on me getting help for myself because I stopped trusting the system. Even the adults around including family caused me to stop trusting because of again the amount of abuse I endured either from physical, verbal or sexual - it varied depending on which staff member was there that day. These people abused their power and were very two-faced, some staff had favorites, who were more protected from the worst abuses the staff did. They were sexually abused, but it wasn't as often as other patients or as horrific compared to those who weren't the favorite of the staff members. I remember this one girl she was being raped during the night and in exchange she was allowed to have her phone calls and the privilege to eat. What I do know is that when I went into the hospital I wasn't nearly as bad as when I left. I was retriggered and retraumatized from past experiences and only a few days after discharge from Hargrove, I was right back in a different mental facility because I tried to end my life. I wasn't able to live with myself on what happened to me when I was at Hartgrove, when I was there to get help from trauma already. All these facts and my own personal experiences I shared showed how sometimes the system does more harm than good. The system-school system, the work system, and most importantly the judicial system-was created to de-

Albizu Campos Speaks!

stroy humans in one way or another. They're failing to protect people from being hurt all over again at places that are supposed to be safe, and provide a way to recover from alarming effects of life. My personal experience when I was in Hartgrove was a horrible experience in general. When I first got to Hartgrove I had gotten a full body check by a male, which made me uncomfortable and when I asked for a female staff member, the male staff member began to yell at me saying he didn't want to check me anyway. Which made me feel uncomfortable and sick from how he talked about my body and how I was grown for my age as at the time I was 15-16. Then when I finally got the female nurse I had been asking to do the body check, she was rough and pulling on my arms and twisting my legs to "check" my body. During my stay like when I finally got to the Girls Unit it was around 4am. I had gotten to my bed as they had kept me downstairs in the waiting room since the early morning before and I finally got to go upstairs around 4am the next morning. When I got to my room I had a roommate and she was nice but she had warned me to have my guard up because of certain male staff coming in at night and doing stuff to the girls. Which made me even more uncomfortable and afraid to even sleep. During the day when it was time to wake up that same male staff who tried to do a body check on me started to bang on my door waking me and my roommate up and was yelling in our ears to get up and it was time for breakfast but he was mainly in my face

and screaming to get up, even though I had barely gotten any sleep. From then on, certain male staff and other female staff began to target me a lot during my stay at Hartgrove which was a total of 4 weeks. During the four weeks I stayed there I saw two girls go to like actual medical hospital because they had gotten toxic shock syndrome because the staff weren't giving the patients pads or tampons when they needed it and the staff wouldn't give the girls new pants if they bled through the ones they had or let them clean themselves when it happened. There was things I also heard and saw at night, I remember one night I was getting up to go ask for water and in a girls room who was only 14 a male staff member was on top of her, doing things to her I can't even say and I didn't even know how to react and when the male staff member saw me he immediately stopped, pulled me by my arm and threatened me that if I told someone or anyone even my parents he would make my time here even worse and would get other girls to beat me. Then also did things to me that night which retraumatized me all over again because the whole reason I was in there was because of the fact I was very depressed and suicidal because I was sexually assaulted just a few months prior. When that began to happen I never spoke to my parents about what happened when I was in the hospital or even spoke about it in general until now. As I continued to stay at Hartgrove that one male staff who tried to body check me and assaulted me began to tell the nurses I was acting out when I wasn't - I was just isolat-

ing myself so I couldn't get targeted - so when that male staff member began to say that I was acting out the nurses began to sedate me almost every morning I would wake up, and put me in restraints and had me put on one-on-one, which is basically someone watches you 24-7 even when you shower. Then whenever I would be sedated sometimes I would wake up feeling so sore in areas you shouldn't feel so sore when sedated. I couldn't even get phone calls to tell my parents to get me out of here because they started to restrict my phone calls and put me on no phone call list. The whole reason they had kept me longer was because of the fact I was going to tell my parents when I got out but the male and female staff members would say to my doctors I'm acting out and need to stay longer so in total I stayed 4 weeks almost a month. I would basically call my time at Hartgrove a hell house like actual hell. After I finally was discharged I began to isolate myself and was so paranoid even by touch I would freak out. I couldn't even go to normal doctor offices without having a panic attack because of the fact I was so traumatized by the time I got out of Hartgrove. Then because of that I ended up having a relapse and being readmitted into a different behavioral hospital. In my own personal experience no matter the amount of times I have tried to forget or not remember those thoughts, they always come crawling back. This is something that I have to live with everyday. Even the permanent damage that was done to my physical body is an everyday reminder of the trauma I experienced while try-

ing to recover.”

In December 2024, more than 100 former minor patients began to speak out on alleged sexual abuse that had occurred while they were at Hartgrove Behavioral Hospital. According to the lawsuit that was filed on behalf of one of the many victims, one victim was only 11 years old when he said he was repeatedly sexually abused and raped by male employees. The victim also claimed that the staff forced the patients to perform sexual acts on other minor patients. A quote from one of the victims said, “Children were told this is a part of therapy.” Then, as it was reported by CBS, there was a former counselor named Edmund Rivers who sexually abused kids repeatedly over 8 years at Chicago hospitals. Rivers was charged with five counts of sexual assault. Prosecutors have said Rivers had abused boys between the ages 7 and 14 years at the facility between 1996 and 2004. Many prosecutors say the alleged abuse took place in multiple locations including Hartgrove.

Five survivors came forward about the sexual abuse they endured at the hands of Rivers. One prosecutor said that “Edmund Rivers was so brazen in abuse he felt totally untouchable that he actually dared victims to come forward, telling them that they would never be believed.” One survivor, who was referred to as John Doe, had said in a statement only at 11 years old when the abuse occurred, “it was almost an every other day occurrence while I was in there.” If they took more than one of us, then

they said they were going to have a group session. They would force us to do things to each other.” There was a patient who is now a man 35 years old who was sexually assaulted as a child and now wants to speak out on what endured while he was at Hartgrove hospital. The man’s lawyers have said he wasn’t the only one, even though the hospital denies these claims. The John Doe who spoke out had expressed he felt powerless and even was threatened with a longer stay if he reported the abuse. This John Doe also said, “They walked in and they would laugh, as if it was a joke or a game, then they would walk back out.”

The accusations came out at the same time when Hartgrove had announced an expansion to hold 200 or more patients. This raised more concern from the plaintiffs’ attorney about patients’ safety. Prosecutors have said, “Edmund had access to the vulnerabilities and traumas they had from the past experience and he exploited that, took advantage of that and preyed upon them.”

The John Doe from the Rivers case described that, “There were a number of individuals around him who were abusing who turned a blind eye who otherwise covered it up.” A female victim who also was a patient at Hartgrove said she experienced sexual abuse from another patient. The hospital knew about the abuse but failed to put security measures to protect the female victim. All this information shows the alarming amount of abuse that different patients endured over the

years. This shows how the ones who are supposed to help and protect those with mental health problems or to process the trauma they had endured are the often cause of the trauma that made them go to an inpatient facility.

Even though these lawsuits were filed a few years ago, the sexual abuse and the abuse in general at Hartgrove is still happening. How we know this is because in December 2025 one of our authors was a patient at Hartgrove Hospital. We and other students we spoke to for this article shared the common experience of sexual abuse mainly after being sedated by staff. Students we spoke to about this article felt sore and bruised when they woke up from sedation in places they shouldn’t be sore in or even feel any type of pain after sedation. So again, even after these lawsuits were made and people spoke out about the abuse that goes on at Hartgrove, the sexual abuse is still a on-going thing.

Riots

“When I was at Streamwood hospital there were two riots. One riot really traumatized me because of what I saw and what happened to me. When the riot began kids were breaking apart wooden chairs and smashing them into windows, breaking them. One girl picked up the glass that broke and started smiling while self-harming. Another girl came over to me and threw CD’s at me. When she did that I was shook into a seizure, and I was having many of those around this time because of all the medicine they were giving me. When the other riot hap-

pened I was in my room and I only saw the police entering the day room. People were fed up with the conditions in mental hospitals so they would start rioting against the hospital. Some other kids saw it as a time to fight or start drama because of how distracted the staff are. But this was my first time even being in a riot so I really didn't know what to do. After I had my seizure I woke up and they were already ready to take me back."

"Not everyone in Streamwood was a kid so they had different units. They had our unit, which was the aggressive young adults or whatever they called it, something like that. And then above us was a criminal unit. These are the dudes that should be in jail. They have no reason to be in there. And then you had the adult unit and them, they was all big. That's all I remember. But there was this one dude, he was from St. Louis. He was like 17, but he was up with the adults cause of how bad he was or whatever. He started a whole riot. Like one day we woke up at like 11 at night. Helicopters, choppers, putting the light on the hospital. Like they was everywhere. Cops outside. We're like, "What the heck is going on, bro?" Next day, this dude from St. Louis, he got moved to our unit. And I remember cause he got shot in his eye. So his eye was weird, you know? And so at the time I thought he was motivating, he was 17 starting riots? He got a bullet in his eye? Like, I remember we all was like, "Man, this dude was cool, bro." But then he went back to jail later on though. By his personal account, cause he was saying that they made it sound worse

than what it was. So allegedly, him and some of his homies up there wanted to get to the girl unit. That was next door because how it worked was at Streamwood one side was boys unit, one side was girls unit, and they'll separate us by one steel door, but we could see each other through the windows. So we used to always be able to talk to the girls through the windows. So I guess they took it a stop further and they were like we want to get on the girl's side. So that him and his homies, I guess they got together in a mob and they broke through the nurse's office. And I think they made it to the girl's side? I don't remember that part, but according to what he told me was their whole objective was they wanted to get to the girl's side and talk to the girls."

After Being Released

"My everyday life before going was school, home, school, home, school, home. But when I started going there, I started being outside more once I got out of the hospital. Sometimes I went back to school after I got out, sometimes I didn't. This is why I'm not a senior now. It felt very frustrating because it was like I knew a lot of times that I got kicked out of school, it was not my fault. People was on me and I was back in the hospital. They was messing with me. It was getting to a point where they was going to keep messing with me. I'm going to attack that. So I started doing what I wanted to do. Because it's just like, if I got to go through all this stuff, what's the point of even trying to be obedient and listen to people that ain't listening to your wants and needs? Especially a par-

ent that ain't listening. I started going out more, doing more of what I wanted to do. Doing some more drugs. Just all type of stuff I was not supposed to be getting into. And I felt like the hospital really affected me. They didn't make anything better. They only ever made it worse."

Throughout multiple interviews and online data we collected, three major things became clear. First, these hospitals are not truly helping improve the mental health of young people. Second, they are causing harm to young people. And third, their purpose within the broader system is to incarcerate and control kids. While some individuals acknowledged the certain positive aspects, most agreed that the negative shades over the small positives. Many former patients described their time there as traumatic, mistreatment, and it gave them more long term mental trauma.

Adults, parents, teachers, and higher authorities all have the idea that these facilities are "benefiting their children," but is it true? According to interviews of multiple former patients who were involuntarily committed at behavioral hospitals who are now students at our school, about two thirds of the people reported having mental health issues before entering the facility and two thirds of people reported having mental issues after leaving the mental facility. This shows that nothing improved or changed for these young people and their symptoms while they were there. Also, many responded with the fact that these hospitals had NO significant

impact on their mental health or NOT a positive one. An article from the National Library of Medicine said that “inpatient psychiatric hospitalization is a common practice when individuals face severe mental health crises. Unfortunately, epidemiological research has demonstrated that following hospitalization, individuals are far more likely to face adverse outcomes such as suicide and self-harm. Although many experience therapeutic benefits from psychiatric hospitalizations, a sizable number of patients do not find their stay beneficial.” In these interviews it was also shown that many of them went back to these hospitals multiple times. Not once, not twice but constantly. They explained that their visits were often difficult and mentally challenging. One student responded and stated, “I felt very unmotivated and very drained most of the day, I wasn’t okay, I’m not meant to be here.” If this environment is supposed to help children why are they stating they constantly feel mentally drained? Why are they having the same thoughts they were having before being admitted? Why are they leaving with the same if not more issues than before? Instead they should be saying they feel better, that stuff has improved, attitudes should become better etc.

This leads up to the HUMONGOUS systematic issues of this behavioral hospital. The conditions inside are so bad to the point where it’s damn near a jail to these children and young people. They are isolated into a room with a random

roommate (like jail). They also have a very strict schedule, they have certain times they have to wake up, eat, shower, go to sleep. Is this not how a correctional facility is run? They even keep certain processing inmates in this facility. Also these patients were FORCED out of their rooms everyday to endure more trauma. The staff catered very poorly to these children’s hygiene. Girls wouldn’t even receive menstrual pads at times. They also used constant drug sedations to “keep control” of these children. Girls and males were being sexually assaulted and touched. Also while these children are here trying to battle the problems they’re going through they had no support inside. It took up to a week for children to see a social worker. They would bang on the walls and doors to wake these students up for breakfast. Like seriously? Banging on doors and yelling and children who are suffering is the best way to help and heal them? They would restrain you if they deemed you “unsafe” and even put spit bags over these children’s heads when they would “act out”. Many reports show that the staff was constantly abusing and grooming these kids, then would threaten them and say if they snitch it will happen to them. What type of mental health support facility is this? These are mentally unstable kids and they are doing nothing but harming them more. Multiple reports online and from the interviews we conducted showed that these workers were harming, abusing, and incarcerating these children and that they

truly cared more about them getting paid at work than helping kids in the institute.

These hospitals are harming these children so badly. It is clear that children in that hospital were being sexually and mentally abused. The data we collected shows how these children were scared of this facility. Many parents/elders use behavioral hospitals as a threat to scare children, so if that’s the case why are kids scared to be admitted? When kids were inside they described feelings such as “tired, drained, & ready to be out in the environment.” Many kids felt unsupported and worse or the same because they would prescribe medication to these children from barely having conversations with them. If this facility was trying to help these kids they would give the resources and voices to do so without treating them like prisoners. So with these kids being prescribed all these different drugs and being drugged out, they think the problem is solved. A former patient mentioned, “After I was discharged, I isolated myself and was so paranoid, even by touch I would freak out.” She also described how when she was discharged she just felt so traumatized by everything she endured while in the facility. This caused her to relapse and be admitted all over again. Another student stated, “I never felt I left better a single time or that something actually changed for the better of me.” This just goes to show that not only were these hospitals not helping these children, it was making these children feel one mil-

lion times worse. It's causing these children to leave with more issues and mental battles.

In conclusion, hospitals such as Hartgrove are supposed to provide safety, care, and professional help for these young struggling teenagers. However, through multiple interviews and reports these kids shared the dark reality of behavioral hospitals. Instead of feeling supported, many children were taunted, traumatized, isolated, and neglected after leaving these facilities. The stories I've collected through this show the consistent

patterns of this neglect, fear, abuse and emotional harm that should never be in an establishment that's supposed to support children. Many of these children entered these hospitals hurting and damaged, yet they were left even more lost and drained than before. Rather than these children truly receiving the support and help they needed, they described being controlled with restraints, medication, and strict routines. Many of these young children referred to it as almost being like a jail... The constant repeated reports about abuse,

safety issues, lack of care, and the overall long term trauma brings into question how much are these hospitals truly helping? Overall mental health treatment should not be leaving children unheard, traumatized, and with more issues than before. The constant stories I've explained and shown today show how much changes are needed in this facility, and accountability needs to be taken. If these hospitals continue to harm these children, then who knows what society will look like in a few years.

Highlights



Clockwise Order:

YouthBuild demos a house.

Students begin to dissect frogs.

Students play a game of flag football at the Class Picnic.

OG's Pana creates a game with pool noodles.



Highlights



Above: YouthBuild takes a trip to Springfield.

Above and Right: Students visit Springfield to advocate for Youth Employment Programs.

Left: The bowling team killing it.

Highlights

Who is Carmen Valentín?

Carmen Valentín Pérez was born in Camuy, Puerto Rico, in 1946, and moved to Chicago at the age of 10 to the Garfield Park neighborhood, what was then known as “La Madison.” She attended Northeastern University and obtained a degree in Spanish, and later became a teacher at Tuley High School. At Tuley in 1973, Valentín aided students in a protest against then principal Herbert Fink, who was discriminating against Black and Puerto Rican students and attempting to instill racial divisions among students and their families. In 1974, Tuley was renamed to Roberto Clemente High School and moved to its familiar location on Division and Western. There, Valentín was forced out by the Board of Education for her previous political actions and her alleged “radicalizing” of students. Around this time, Valentín helped to found a new alternative school then known as the “Puerto Rican High School,” but which would later become Pedro Albizu Campos High School—the school we are at right now. Valentín would also help to found José de Diego Community Academy in the old Tuley building in 1976 and the Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, worked with ASPIRA of Illinois, and helped create education programs at Stateville Penitentiary.

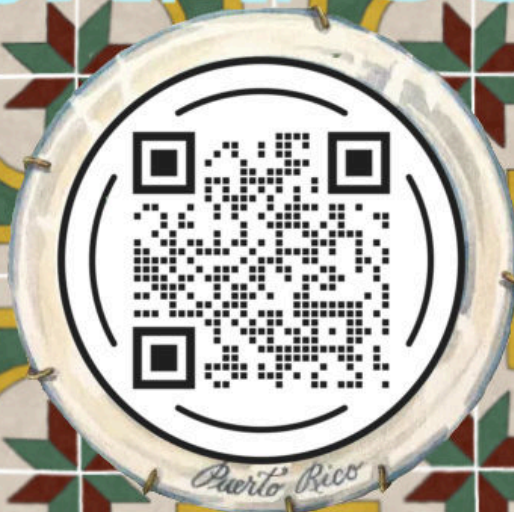
In the late 1970s, Valentín became involved in the group known as the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña (or the FALN, which means the Armed Forces of Puerto Rican National Liberation). The FALN was an underground revolutionary group that engaged in a war against the United States government for the independence of Puerto Rico. They targeted institutions, like banks and military outposts, that were directly responsible for the colonization of Puerto Rico, but also targeted institutions that did harm to Puerto Ricans and other victims of imperialism within the United States, like police departments. The FALN, except for their first attack in downtown Manhattan, never sought to harm people, only cause damage to institutions. In 1980, Valentín and 11 others were arrested in Evanston, Illinois. She was charged with “seditious conspiracy” (the crime of plotting to overthrow the US government) and other crimes related to armed robbery, which had been one of the tactics the FALN used. No member of the FALN was ever convicted of a violent crime. Valentín and the other political prisoners argued that they were being treated as civilians who committed crimes, when in reality, they were prisoners of war, like Nelson Mandela in South Africa at the time, and many other prisoners of war who had been imprisoned for fighting against western imperialism.

After a more than decade long fight for her release, including much involvement from then students of Pedro Albizu Campos High School, Valentín was granted clemency in 1999.



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