

# The PipeLine Dilemma

By Adisa Ward

School plays a fundamental role in the fostering of youth as they make their way into adulthood. This transition is vital to a child's growth and development. During this time children are expected to build confidence, socialize and learn how to become productive members of society. Unfortunately, there are countless issues hindering children from reaching their full potential. One of the largest problems is the school to prison pipeline and its counterpart school-push out. The school to prison pipeline is the correlation between school punishments that eventually lead into students being introduced to the prison system.

In 1988, metal detectors were first introduced to New York City Public Schools. Metal detectors were introduced as an initiative to end violence in schools. According to an article by the *New York Times*, by 2016 100 New York City Public Schools were estimated to have been equipped with metal detectors and scanners, security, searches and pat-downs. This is often compared to airport security. Statistics from the *New York Times* shows that over 900,000 students go through this prison "like" ordeal every day. Students have expressed that the extreme security makes them feel criminalized and violated.

Students also complained that entrance into the school caused them to be late and miss class time due to the long lines and unreliable equipment at the security checkpoints. Lines for check-in are usually long and lead outside of the building. It can take up to two hours to get into the building. Calls home and detention are common effects of being written up for lateness. When students try to explain the reason for their lateness, they are met with an apathetic or sarcastic "maybe you should have gotten to school earlier" or "wake up on time" from the staff, who get to enter the school without any hassle or security check.

Punishments are not only detrimental to a child education but to their social-skills, self-visualization and overall well-being. For example. After realizing that their efforts and complaints about getting to class on time are not being met, a child will stop trying to get to class on time. The student work will start to slack due to missing class time from receiving detention or suspension. After many suspension and parental conferences, students may start to feel helpless and rebel against their parents and people in authority. The On average minorities, especially African-American and Hispanics students are likely to drop-out of school before they reach the 9th grade. According to Gary Sweeten of Arizona State University, students that are suspended are four time likely to end-up in the criminal justice system and finds educators to untrustworthy. He also finds that alienation from school accelerate the course toward juvenile offending. Also, the Centers for Disease Control, find that out-of-school youth are significantly more likely than in-school students to fall under the influence of criminal elements, or use illegal substances.

School push-out is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. It leads students out of school on to the street and can direct them to a life of crime. In order to stop the school to prison pipeline, schools need to implement a restorative justice program. Restorative justice focuses on repairing and engaging the student instead of punishing them. With a restorative justice program, the need for high tech security will be reduce, and the educational system may return to what it was meant to be.