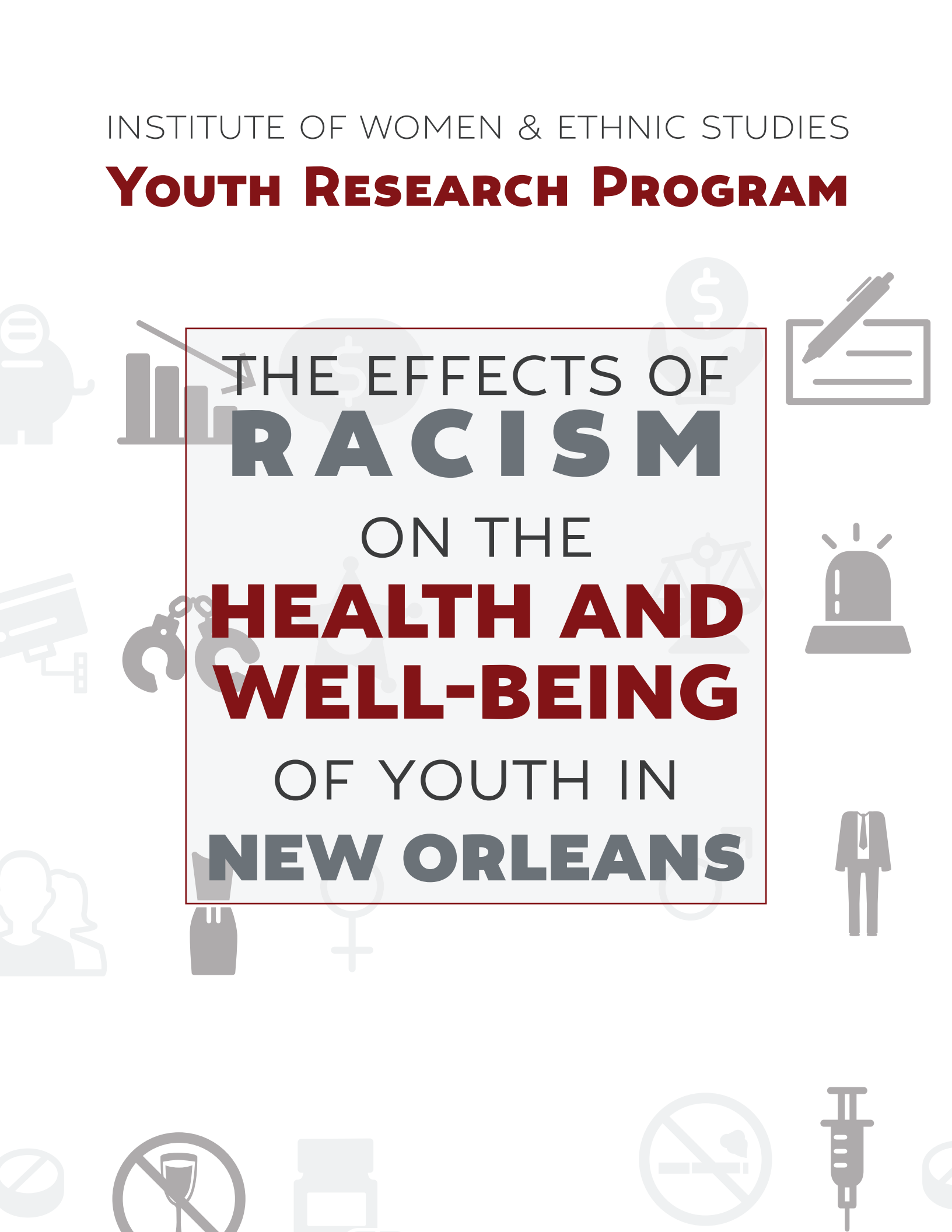


INSTITUTE OF WOMEN & ETHNIC STUDIES

# YOUTH RESEARCH PROGRAM



THE EFFECTS OF  
**RACISM**  
ON THE  
**HEALTH AND  
WELL-BEING**  
OF YOUTH IN  
**NEW ORLEANS**

# INTRODUCTION

*The Wellness Evaluation Community Action Network (WE-CAN!) Youth Research Program (YRP) was a youth participatory action research project (YPAR) conducted by 10 youth of color under the age of 18 from across New Orleans and the surrounding areas. YPAR allows youth to investigate problems that impact their community through gathering data to understand the causes of these problems, and taking action by recommending solutions and disseminating their findings to other members of the community, as well as to policy makers.*

*WE-CAN! YPAR participants were recruited from the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies' (IWES) programs, as well as from three IWES community partners, the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association (VAYLA), Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools, and the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP). The YRP took place from October 2014 until June 2015.*

*During the first four months, the team of youth researchers participated in a ten-session research training wherein they learned about the fundamentals of research ethics, design and planning, and incrementally identified a research topic.*

*During the remaining months, the youth collected and analyzed data on a research topic of their choosing, and they developed the data dissemination products, a written report, a podcast and a mural, in order to raise awareness about the community issues they studied.*

**THE FIRST SECTION OF THIS REPORT  
OUTLINES THE YRP TRAINING AND THE  
RESEARCH PROCESS UTILIZED BY THE YOUTH  
RESEARCHERS. THE SECOND SECTION OF  
THIS REPORT WAS LARGELY DEVELOPED BY  
YPAR PARTICIPANTS AND SUMMARIZES THEIR  
RESEARCH FINDINGS.**



# MURAL PROJECT



# WRITTEN BY STAFF

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# WRITTEN BY YOUTH

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# RESEARCH TRAINING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

IWES staff developed the WE-CAN! YPAR training program, and grounded the training in the concepts of research justice and participatory action research (PAR). Training program lessons were adapted from The Data Center's "An Introduction to Research Justice Toolkit" and the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) curriculum created by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities<sup>1,2</sup>. In designing the training program, IWES staff had to consider the various levels of experience that youth from the partner organizations had with PAR. One partner organization had previously conducted a YPAR project while other organizations had limited experience with PAR, and their youth would be learning to conduct research for the first time. In addition, youth researchers recruited for the program ranged in age from 11 to 17. Therefore, adult allies worked to reframe some of the lessons so that they would be engaging for all participants, regardless of age, while also allowing room for more experienced or interested youth to lead lessons and co-facilitate when they were interested in doing so.

The first training lessons were dedicated to addressing different types of knowledge (community and cultural, experiential, and institutionalized), inequalities in research, and understanding how YPAR can allow young people to influence positive changes in their communities. This was an important element of the training because although many youth had been exposed to research in school or had been a participant in research done in their communities, being able to conduct their own research was a new idea for many of the YRP members.

A mapping exercise allowed each group member to map their home, school, and neighborhood communities and analyze the resources within each area. This activity generated discussion about the assets and challenges in each of those places, which was important because YRP participants wanted to learn about how research can not only highlight the problems within a community, but also how it can document the things that make a community special or strong. Discussing community assets and challenges proved to be important information for the group to have before starting to learn about the criteria for a good research project because it sparked ideas about issues they wanted to learn more about.

The YRP members brainstormed potential research topics and voted to determine which topic they would study. **The group decided to focus its research on the effects of racism on the health and wellbeing of youth in New Orleans.** They decided to place a specific emphasis on how racism relates to four other community problems; sexism, substance use, police brutality, and underpaid workers.

As they began thinking about the types of questions they wanted to answer through data gathering, the YRP members identified potential causes and effects of the identified issues and considered the factors that contribute to each of the community issues. In order to guide the design of the research project, the YRP members created a vision and mission statement for their project as well as specific goals for what they hoped to learn from the work and research questions that would help them meet the identified goals. The group also completed a power analysis that helped them identify potential allies, opponents, and decision-makers related to the research topics they selected so that they could focus their research strategically and be prepared for any challenges they might encounter.

IWES staff taught the group about different methods of data collection. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were covered including focus groups, surveys, interviews, and other methods such as Photovoice, mapping, and film. Group members discussed the pros and cons as well as their interest in using the various methods and eventually decided on mixed methods data collection using both focus groups and a survey. Each group member participated in designing the questions for the survey and focus group guide. Following group discussion, the final questions were selected and compiled into the data collection tools.

As a last step before beginning to collect data, YRP participants created a timeline for the research process and assigned group members to various research tasks based on strengths and interests.

# RESEARCH PROCESS

## FOCUS GROUPS

Four focus groups were planned. Therefore, the YRP participants separated into four subgroups based on their interest in the four community problems identified (sexism, underpaid workers, police brutality, and substance use). Each subgroup organized and conducted a focus group session, which ranged in size from four to twelve participants. Focus group participants were aged 18 years and younger and were recruited largely from partner organizations as well as the schools that the youth researchers attended.

## SURVEY

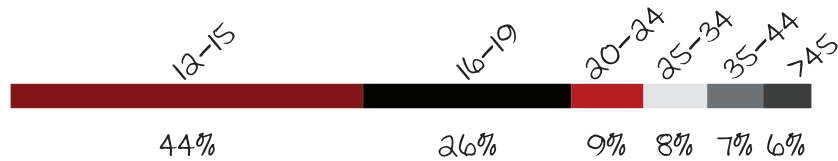
The youth researchers created a 43-item survey to gather demographic information and data on the experiences community members had with sexism, low wages, substance use and police brutality. The questions also requested demographic information so that during the analysis phase of the project the youth would be able to consider the responses based on race, age and gender. The YRP participants decided that each researcher should collect at least 20 surveys over the course of the data collection period although this number was periodically adjusted based on how many surveys had been completed. In all, the researchers were able to collect 194 surveys. Seventy percent (70%) of the respondents were other youth (<25 years of age) although respondents ranged in age from 10-68 years.

The time frame for the YRP did not allow for YRP participants to receive in-depth training on the use of quantitative or qualitative data analysis software. Therefore, IWES staff analyzed the quantitative data based on data requests made by the youth researchers. IWES staff also transcribed the focus group discussions. Each of the four subgroups of youth researchers identified distinct themes within the transcript of the focus group they facilitated, after which the four groups jointly sorted the themes into categories that would guide the group's final conclusions and recommendations. Their conclusions and recommendations appear in the youth researchers' report.

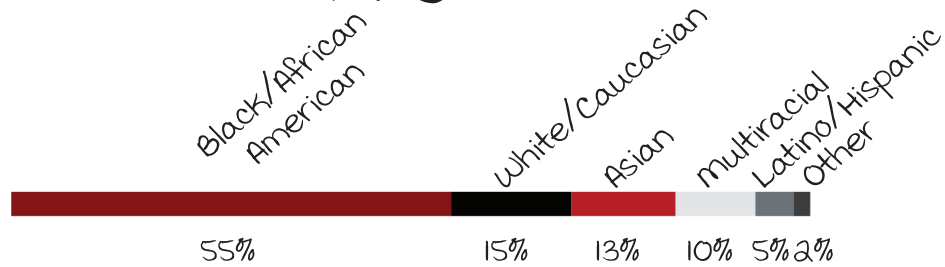
# SURVEY

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### AGE



### RACE



### GENDER PRONOUN





# YOUTH RESEARCH PROGRAM

## SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

FINDINGS

*The following report was written by YRP participants and presents data from the survey they developed as well as quotes from the focus groups they conducted. Youth researchers partnered with the IWES staff who conducted the YPAR training and guided them through the research process in order to write the Discussion and Conclusion section of their report. The YPAR participants' overall conclusions about the results of their research are framed within the context of the categories they identified to group the themes that emerged from the focus group sessions. Additional quotes are provided in the Discussion and Conclusion section to illustrate the thoughts and experiences of the young people who participated in focus groups. The following page lists the categories the youth identified for the themes of the research findings from the data they collected.*

# MINIMUM WAGE WORKERS



# POLICE



# SEXISM



# SUBSTANCE USE



# MINIMUM WAGE WORKERS

WHILE 33% OF RESPONDENTS HAD APPLIED FOR A MINIMUM WAGE JOB IN THE PAST, ALMOST TWICE THAT PERCENTAGE (56%) DID NOT BELIEVE THAT A PERSON COULD ACCUMULATE WEALTH SOLELY BY EARNING THE MINIMUM WAGE. SINCE A MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE THAT RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY DO NOT BELIEVE THEY CAN ACCUMULATE WEALTH FROM WORKING LOW WAGE JOBS, IT SEEMS THAT MANY WORKERS ARE NOT BEING PAID ENOUGH AS IT IS AND THEY ARE NOT RECEIVING AS MANY HOURS AS THEY NEED. THESE FINDINGS, IN COMBINATION WITH THE FACT THAT 49% OF RESPONDENTS SAID THAT THEIR BOSS 'NEVER' GIVES OUT PROMOTIONS, ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT SUGGESTS THAT THERE COULD BE A BIGGER PROBLEM THAN JUST LOW WAGES AND MINIMAL HOURS. TWENTY PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT THEIR BOSSES DO NOT GIVE OUT PROMOTIONS VERY OFTEN. ALTOGETHER, THAT MEANS THAT NEARLY 60% OF RESPONDENTS FEEL LIKE PROMOTIONS AND MOBILITY ARE SCARCE IN A COMMUNITY WHERE MINIMUM WAGE OR NEAR MINIMUM WAGE JOBS ARE PREVALENT.

LOW WAGES ARE A CONCERN FOR YOUTH BECAUSE THEY CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC DISENFRANCHISEMENT, WHICH CAN HAVE GENERATIONAL EFFECTS. OFTEN, WHEN PARENTS ARE OF LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, YOUTH ALSO TEND TO GROW UP AND CONTINUE THE CYCLE OF FAMILIES LIVING IN LOW-INCOME CIRCUMSTANCES.

If you're from an underdeveloped country and you don't come here with much education or skills and...what can you do other than get a minimum wage job? And even after that, you want to keep it or maintain it so, even if you're underpaid or not being granted what you deserve, you're not going to risk losing it so, that's exploitable and that's racism.

Focus Group 3 Participant

# POLICE

POLICE BRUTALITY WAS CHOSEN AS A PRIMARY SUBTOPIC BECAUSE AS YOUTH AND CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY, WE FIND THAT TOO OFTEN WE ARE MADE TO FEAR LAW ENFORCEMENT FROM EXAMPLES GIVEN TO US IN THE MEDIA. EXAMPLES LIKE TRAYVON MARTIN, TAMIR RICE, AND A GROWING NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN SHOWN NO JUSTICE WHEN KILLED, PROVING THAT OUR SYSTEM DOES NOT VALUE OUR LIVES OR THE LIVES OF THOSE AROUND US.

20% OF BLACK RESPONDENTS AND 39% OF LATINO RESPONDENTS SAID THAT THEY HAD EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE AT THE HANDS OF THE POLICE. GIVEN THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS WHO HAVE DIED AT THE HANDS OF THE POLICE, IT IS INTERESTING TO SEE THAT SO FEW PEOPLE SURVEYED HAD EXPERIENCED POLICE VIOLENCE. SIXTY-SEVEN PERCENT OF ALL RESPONDENTS (OF ALL RACES) REPORTED THAT THEY BELIEVE THE POLICE TREAT PEOPLE OF COLOR MORE VIOLENTLY THAN THEY TREAT WHITE PEOPLE. THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT SHOWS THAT THIS BIAS IS COMMONLY BELIEVED AND IS LIKELY NOT JUST A STEREOTYPE. WE ARE GLAD THAT IT IS NOT ONLY PEOPLE OF COLOR WHO RECOGNIZE THE REALITY OF THIS BIAS.

Yeah, I have witnessed it. um, my older brother, he gets arrested like, a lot, and he's like 17...So he's like a year older than me. And one time, he ran into our house and the police were after him and, our house is like a shotgun and he ran through the bathroom while I was in the bathroom and I had just put my clothes on so I was getting ready to get out. The police, like, tackled him and the policeman's knee was on the back of his... no, the top of his head, and the way they pulled his arm, it was like all the way like that. It was just like, "Whoa dude, chill, he's only 17, he's not going to do much."

Focus Group 3 Participant

# SEXISM

THE YRP HAD MANY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT HOW ISSUES OF RACISM AFFECTED WOMEN AS COMPARED TO MEN. SPECIFICALLY, OUR GROUP DISCUSSED APPEARANCE, STREET HARASSMENT, POLICING, INCARCERATION AND EMPLOYMENT OVER THE COURSE OF THE PROGRAM. HOWEVER, ON THE SURVEY AND IN OUR QUESTIONS, WE ASKED RESPONDENTS TO REPORT ON EMPLOYMENT, APPEARANCE AND PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION BY RACE. SIXTY PERCENT OF ALL SURVEY RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT BLACK WOMEN ARE JUDGED MORE FOR THEIR APPEARANCE THAN WOMEN OF OTHER RACES. NINETEEN PERCENT OF BLACK WOMEN BELIEVE THAT WHITE WOMEN TEND TO ATTEND MORE PRESTIGIOUS COLLEGES THAN BLACK WOMEN, WHEREAS 41% OF ALL NON-BLACK WOMEN SURVEYED BELIEVED THAT STEREOTYPE TO BE TRUE.

UNFORTUNATELY, GIVEN THAT WE PRIMARILY SURVEYED YOUTH, THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH DATA POINTS TO MAKE A CLAIM ABOUT HOW BLACK WOMEN ARE TREATED IN THE WORKPLACE AS COMPARED TO MEN OR NON-BLACK WOMEN.

...I went to Ben Franklin my 9th grade year and there was a policy on shorts, and you know how some African-American females, like we have different [physical] features (everybody has different body types) and usually there's [a policy of] no shorts above the knees. And a lot of African-American females would come with shorts above the knees and they'd always get called out, but there'd be, you know, a white or an Asian female who had their shorts above the knees and they wouldn't say anything.

Focus Group 3 Participant



# SUBSTANCE USE

SUBSTANCE USE AND SUBSEQUENT ABUSE IS A WIDELY-FEARED OUTCOME FOR YOUTH IN MANY DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES. MANY TIMES THE HORRIBLE EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE USE ARE WITNESSED BY FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THOSE SUFFERING AND FEAR IS INSTILLED IN YOUTH BY THE COMMUNITY IN THE HOPES OF PREVENTING FUTURE ADDICTION. HOWEVER, SUCH FEAR TACTICS USUALLY COME AT A PRICE OF STIGMATIZING THOSE AFFECTED WITH ADDICTION AND NOT PROPERLY EDUCATING YOUTH ON ITS EFFECTS.

ADDITIONALLY, SOME YOUTH SEE SUBSTANCE USE AS A LARGER COMMUNITY ISSUE RATHER THAN JUST AN INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY. THE SINGULAR ACT OF SMOKING, FOR EXAMPLE, NOT ONLY HAS AN INDIVIDUAL EFFECT, BUT A COMMUNITY ONE IN THAT OTHERS ARE OFTEN HARMED BY SECOND HAND SMOKE. SUBSTANCE USE CAN ALSO AFFECT THE CULTURE OF A COMMUNITY.

I honestly do think it affects the community because if you're drinking and you're driving, you might run into someone's home, you might get into a car accident, and if you weren't you won't be in those situations. If you are doing other substances, let's say heroin, cocaine, crack, you might have the stove on, you might set your house on fire, you could burn down your neighbor's house. Your house and the neighbor's house. You know, you're putting people in danger. It's not just you in danger, if that kind of situation breaks out, like what if the gas light breaks, like, there's an explosion. Things like that you kind of have to put into consideration. So that's about it- but like things happen that could have been avoided, because of substance use.

Focus Group | Participant

# DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

## DISCUSSION

*The research topics, data collection methods and findings summarized in this report are part of a larger process to redefine assumptions about who can produce knowledge in our world. YPAR is an approach that is focused on building the skills of young people who are living the issues they are studying so they can be agents of positive change in their own communities.*

*By working with the support of professional adult researchers, 10 young people in New Orleans were able to generate findings that point to the roots of the problems that they prioritized. After reviewing all the data collected, a subcommittee of the YPAR team took on the hard work of analyzing data and looking for themes among the hundreds of responses that their peers provided.*

*The first question used to begin this research inquiry was, “What are the factors that impact the well-being of young people in my community?” The answers to that question were not simple. The conclusions to follow are based on the qualitative data categories that youth researchers identified, which include the individual, interpersonal, community and societal factors shaping the lives of young people. These categories include:*

**COMMUNITY IMPACT**



**MENTAL HEALTH**



**AUTHORITY ABUSE**



**STEREOTYPES**



**PRIVILEGE ABUSE**



**POLICE BRUTALITY**



**ECONOMIC  
DISENFRANCHISEMENT**



**NEGLECT**



**YOUTH ASPIRATIONS**



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

YOUTH ARE CONNECTED STRONGLY TO THE COMMUNITIES THAT THEY LIVE IN. PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY CAN REFLECT HOW OTHERS MAY FEEL ABOUT YOUTH AND HOW YOUTH MAY FEEL ABOUT THEMSELVES. STRONG COMMUNITIES THAT ARE SAFE, EQUITABLE, AND CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF ITS RESIDENTS AND MEMBERS CREATE HAPPIER, HEALTHIER CITIZENS. YOUTH ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT WHERE OTHERS' ANGER AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS COME FROM AND HOW THEY CAN IMPACT THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE. YOUTH ARE ALSO ABLE TO IDENTIFY HOW THESE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS CAN AFFECT THEM AS INDIVIDUALS AND THE WELL-BEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN GENERAL. THUS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO ASK YOUTH HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITIES IN ORDER TO ACCURATELY GAUGE HOW MUCH MAY NEED TO BE CHANGED IN ORDER TO BETTER THE COMMUNITY.

You can tell...you can tell  
[when someone's going  
through it].

Focus Group 4 Participant

# MENTAL HEALTH

YOUTH DO FEAR THE NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE. YOUTH RESPONDED TO SUBSTANCE USE QUESTIONS BY OFTEN DISCUSSING HOW IT MAY AFFECT THE USER. THIS CAN BE HARMFUL BECAUSE IT MAY PERPETUATE STEREOTYPES ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ITS CAUSES, VICTIMS AND SOLUTIONS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER BECAUSE SUBSTANCE USE DOES NOT ALWAYS MEAN ABUSE. YOUTH UNDERSTAND THAT PEOPLE MAY USE SUBSTANCES TO SELF-MEDICATE. YOUTH RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS A COMMON PERCEPTION THAT PEOPLE USE DRUGS TO GET HIGH RATHER THAN FOR MEDICAL REASONS, BUT PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW THAT THE LATTER OCCURS MORE OFTEN THAN MANY PEOPLE MIGHT EXPECT.

I had to go to a, well it was like a mental hospital or whatever and basically everyone there was there for like substance abuse. I was there for clicking out, though, but...and it was just an eye opener to me because they all did it just because they say they were stressed out.

Focus Group 2 Participant

...when people judge you, one thing can lead to another. People judging can get that person that's being judged into depression or something and it can get them to do much worse things than what they are already doing.

Focus Group 1 Participant

# AUTHORITY ABUSE

AUTHORITY ABUSE IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER BECAUSE YOUTH OFTEN FALL VICTIM TO AGEIST MINDSETS WHERE THEIR VOICES ARE OVERSHADOWED BY THOSE WHO ARE CONSIDERED "AUTHORITIES" (TEACHERS, PARENTS, DISCIPLINARIANS, POLICE, ETC.). SUCH MINDSETS CAN BE EXTREMELY HARMFUL TO YOUTH EDUCATION AND FEELINGS OF PERSONAL SECURITY. YOUTH RECOGNIZE POLICE OFFICERS AND OTHER AUTHORITY FIGURES IN THEIR LIVES AS HAVING THE ABILITY TO ABUSE THEIR POWER AND NEGATIVELY IMPACT THEIR LIVES. YOUTH RECOGNIZE THAT SUCH MINDSETS CAN CREATE AN UNFAIR SYSTEM THAT ALLOWS FOR INJUSTICE TO OCCUR BECAUSE ONE PARTY IS CONSIDERED AUTOMATICALLY CREDIBLE WHILE THE OTHER IS NOT. YOUTH ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT HOW THEY WILL BE TREATED ONCE THEY LEAVE SCHOOL, WHERE AN AUTHORITY FIGURE SUCH AS A SUPERVISOR COULD MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT ONE'S ABILITY TO WORK BASED ON THINGS ONE CANNOT CONTROL.

Say if you was a Black person, and you was going for a job interview, and there's a white man and he was going for a job interview. And the Black man probably went first, and he met all the requirements for the job, and then they told him they will contact him or whatever. So, then the white man went, and he meets all the requirements too, but they pick the white man over the Black man because they didn't want him because they thought he was Black so they don't want him.

Focus Group 4 Participant

WHEN ASKED WHETHER THEY THOUGHT THAT THEIR GENDER WOULD AFFECT THEIR DESIRED CAREER, YOUNG MEN TENDED TO FEEL LIKE THEY WOULD NOT BE HINDERED WHILE YOUNG WOMEN WERE MORE LIKELY TO RECOGNIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION. AT THE SAME TIME, MOST YOUTH FELT THAT ANYONE WOULD BE ABLE TO DO ANY JOB WELL AND SHOULD BE PAID EQUALLY IF DOING THE SAME WORK AS ANOTHER PERSON, REGARDLESS OF AGE, GENDER, RACE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR IMMIGRATION STATUS.



# STEREOTYPES

STEREOTYPING IS REAL - AND MANY PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THAT IT BOTH EXISTS AND NEEDS TO BE CHANGED. NOT EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT STEREOTYPING DOES, BUT OUR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS SHARED THEIR EXPERIENCES. MANY TIMES YOUTH WILL FACTOR IN POSSIBLE STEREOTYPES WHEN CONSIDERING HOW DIFFERENT RACIAL GROUPS WILL FARE (INCLUDING THEIR OWN). WHEN YOUTH PERCEIVE THEY ARE BEING RACIALLY STEREOTYPED, THEY CAN FEEL LIMITED AND UNWANTED BY SOCIETY. SOCIETALLY, THESE STEREOTYPES ARE HARMFUL BECAUSE THEY CARRY ON CLOSE-MINDED AND RESTRICTIVE ATTITUDES THAT OFTEN TRANSLATE INTO UNETHICAL POLICIES TARGETED AT YOUTH, SUCH AS METAL DETECTORS PLACED IN SCHOOLS OR INCREASED POLICING.

I felt like the only reason I was in [detention] is because he stereotyped me and like he thought because I was a Black kid, that I'm already bad and I deserve to be there anyway. He assumed that they [Black and Latino youth] were bad apples anyway...it just felt really unfair.

Focus Group 3 Participant

One time I was at the store and then the store man kept looking at me. And I was like, 'man, what's he looking at?' And then he asked me can I hurry up. I think he thought I was out to steal something...I felt played, or unwanted.

Focus Group 4 Participant

# PRIVILEGE ABUSE

PRIVILEGE ABUSE IS A VERY NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR YOUTH. PRIVILEGE ABUSE BY WHITE OR CAUCASIAN PEOPLE, CIS-GENDERED PEOPLE, LAWMAKERS AND EVEN TEACHERS CAN CAUSE YOUTH TO FEEL THAT CERTAIN GROUPS ARE ALWAYS MORE VALUED THAN THEY ARE. IT IS BECAUSE YOUTH ARE CONDITIONED TO BELIEVE THAT NO ONE CARES FOR THEIR STRUGGLES, RACISM AND PRIVILEGE CAN LIVE ON.

I think a couple of years ago I was at this school and my sister had a baseball game and we had a playground and it was like 3 of us that was Black and the rest of them was white and the school had said, 'No, y'all can't play here.' But then that's when just all of the other white kids just went on there [to play].

Focus Group 2 Participant

[White people], they get more than what the Blacks can get. Like get away with a lot of stuff.

Focus Group 4 Participant

# POLICE BRUTALITY

POLICE BRUTALITY CAN REMAIN IN THE MINDS OF YOUTH EVEN WHEN NOT EXPERIENCED PERSONALLY. MANY YOUTH SEE THE VIOLENCE PERPETUATED BY THE POLICE AS USUALLY UNWARRANTED AND NEEDLESS. THE VIOLENCE IS MOST NOTABLY IDENTIFIED WHEN THE SEVERITY OF THE ABUSE GREATLY OUTWEIGHS THE ACTIONS OF THE VICTIMS. SOCIETY NEED TO MOVE FORWARD WITH TRYING TO PREVENT DISPROPORTIONATE POLICE VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE OF COLOR.

I went with [my uncle] to the bank, right? We came out the bank, some policemen. - and I was like 6 years old - policemen came, started asking my uncle some questions. 30 or 20 minutes later they started beating him down. You know, I'm just crying sitting there and I don't know what to do, who to call, and like, it was just really shocking.

Focus Group 1 Participant

[The police], he slammed my cousin at wal-mart.

Focus Group 1 Participant

my cousin was shot by a police officer. He was coming out of the store because he's around the corner from the store and the police officer asked him where he was coming from because he didn't have school that day. But it was supposed to be a school day for all the other schools so I guess the cop thought that he was skipping school. I don't know why, but my cousin, I guess out of things he's heard or I guess out of instinct, he ran and the cop like instead of trying to catch him, he shot him in the back and now he's paralyzed.

Focus Group 2 Participant

# ECONOMIC DISENFRANCHISEMENT

ACCUMULATING WEALTH ON MINIMUM WAGE IS AN EXTREMELY UNLIKELY POSSIBILITY AND THEREFORE UNATTAINABLE FOR MANY. THE POSSIBILITY OF ACCUMULATING WEALTH BY EARNING MINIMUM WAGE IS VERY LOW AND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN DISCERNING HOW YOUTH OF COLOR CAN BECOME FINANCIALLY SECURE. THE NUMBER OF PROMOTIONS THAT ARE AWARDED TO WORKING PEOPLE AND THE NUMBER OF HOURS WORKERS ARE ALLOWED TO SCHEDULE ARE CHALLENGES THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO EASE THE CHALLENGES OF LOW-INCOME FAMILIES AND YOUTH.

# NEGLECT

NEGLECT MAY BE DEFINED VERY DIFFERENTLY BY DIFFERENT YOUTH. OFTENTIMES, NEGLECT IS THE SIMPLE DISREGARD FOR YOUTH'S FEELINGS BY USING RACIAL SLURS, OR DISREGARDING WHAT THEY SAY. OFTEN TIMES, IT IS TAKING AWAY A YOUTH'S FEELING OF SAFETY OR COMPROMISING THEIR SAFE SPACES.

NEGLECT IS NOT RESTRICTED TO PARENTAL NEGLECT WHEN IT COMES TO YOUTH. NEGLECT INCLUDES THE POLICE, SCHOOLS, CITY INVESTMENT AND OTHER LARGER SYSTEMS. THIS KIND OF NEGLECT CAN HURT COMMUNITIES AND YOUTH INDIVIDUALLY BECAUSE CONTINUOUS SYSTEMIC NEGLECT CAN FOSTER FEAR AND DISTRUST IN NECESSARY SERVICES LIKE POLICE PROTECTION AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT. NEGLECT CAN PREVENT YOUTH AND THE COMMUNITY FROM RECEIVING WHAT THEY NEED. WHEN THE POLICE DO NOT COME QUICKLY, FOR EXAMPLE, YOUTH PERCEIVE THAT POLICE DO NOT CARE ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITIES OR THEIR WELL-BEING.

I kind of got pissed at the police because my house was robbed a few years back and they took like 5 hours to get there. Literally, 5 hours from like 4 o'clock in the afternoon to after 8 o'clock at night. And I was little, like, I was in the 7th grade. And I was calling like 'it's just me and my three little brothers, they're like 4, 5 and 6, and like I have no one home, I need help. my house has been broken into, everything's open, like things are gone missing,' and they took 5 hours to get there. I feel like policemen, like [in New Orleans East], have a problem with that. Like, if they feel like it's not as important, or it's not a big deal, or whatever, if they don't know you.

Focus Group 1 Participant

# YOUTH ASPIRATIONS

THE YOUTH WE TALKED TO WANTED TO BE REAL ESTATE OWNERS, BASKETBALL PLAYERS, COSMETOLOGISTS, SPORTS ANALYSTS, DENTISTS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, DOCTORS, MECHANICS AND DOZENS OF OTHER PROFESSIONS. WE HEARD FROM MANY YOUTH WHO CONSIDER MAKING AND SAVING MONEY TO BE IMPORTANT TO YOUTH AND THEIR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS BECAUSE YOUTH OF COLOR ARE CONCERNED ABOUT ASPIRING FOR CAREERS AND PRIORITIZING FINANCIAL SECURITY. CONTRARY TO MANY EXISTING MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF YOUNG PEOPLE, THE YOUTH WE TALKED TO WERE FOCUSED ON SPENDING WISELY RATHER THAN BLOWING THEIR MONEY.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

THE ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH DESERVE TO BE REALIZED AND IN ORDER TO BE PUT INTO THE BEST POSITION TO ACHIEVE, CHANGES ARE REQUIRED. WHAT YOUTH REALLY NEED IS MORE YOUTH INPUT IN SCHOOLS, TEACHERS WHO LISTEN TO STUDENTS AND MORE COMPASSIONATE SCHOOLS IN GENERAL. WE RECOMMEND THAT PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES SUPPORT EDUCATION REFORM EFFORTS, MOVEMENTS LIKE #BLACKLIVESMATTER AND #BLACKJOBSMATTER, AND IMMIGRATION REFORM. IN YOUR DAILY LIVES, WE ALSO SUGGEST SUPPORTING BLACK OWNED BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT SOCIAL JUSTICE AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT.



### **ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF WOMEN & ETHNIC STUDIES**

Founded in 1993, IWES is a national non-profit health organization that creates initiatives to heal communities, especially those facing adversity. Through community-driven research programs, training, advocacy, and partnerships, IWES helps to build emotional and physical well-being, resilience and capacity among women, their families and communities of color, especially those which are disadvantaged.

IWES uses a Social Ecological Model (SEM), which recognizes that individual behavior is shaped by the intersection of multiple influences occurring at the interpersonal, community and societal levels. Through this in-depth, multi-dimensional approach, IWES creates culturally proficient programs, activities and research to address and advocate for the emotional and physical well-being, resilience, and capacity of women of color, their families and communities to heal and create sustainable change. IWES works in the following areas: Resilience; Emotional/Physical Well-Being; Youth Development; and Sexual Health.

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