

# Unlock POTENTIAL



**Unlock Potential** (UP) is a partnership between Persevere and the Responsible Business Initiative for Justice (RBIJ), funded through Walmart.org Center for Racial Equity. Our mission is to break the cycle of incarceration by providing meaningful employment opportunities to a statistically at-risk group of young people.

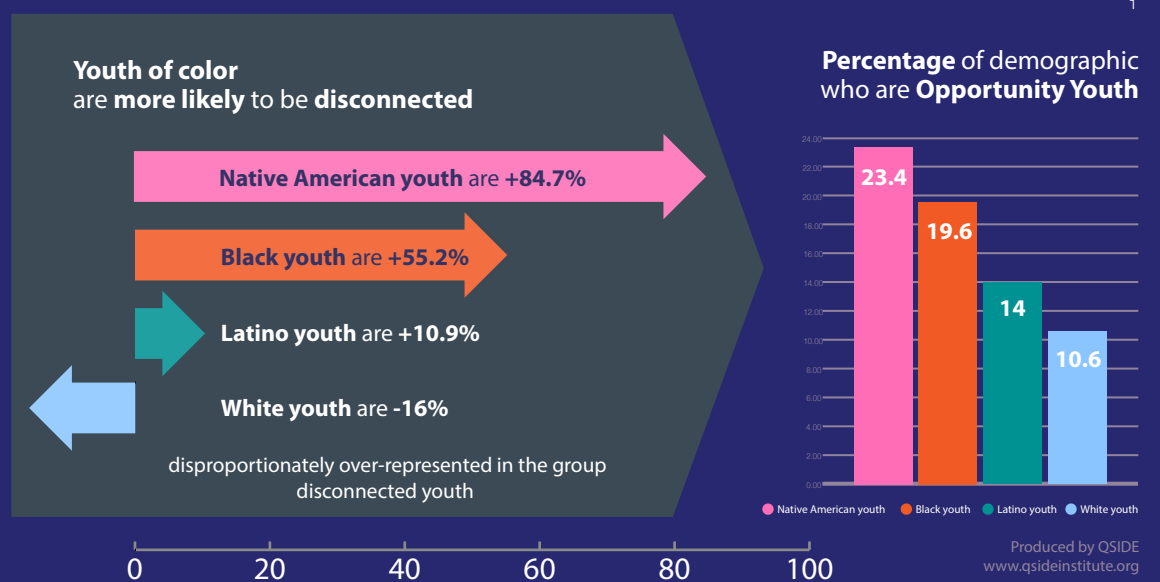
- By engaging businesses, community partners, and youth, we can make the biggest impact by:
- 1) creating a National Institute to focus on best practices and supportive policies to address racial and systemic disparities that impact this population.**
  - 2) developing an intentional hiring program focused on Opportunity Youth with built-in community partnerships that will offer supports for the youth and the hiring partner.**

## Where Need Meets Opportunity

America is currently home to more than 4 million youth aged 16-24 who aren't in school or working. They are known as *Opportunity Youth* because of their potential value to our communities and economies. Young people of color are up to three-to-six times more likely to be disconnected than whites. They are far more likely to suffer adverse outcomes like poverty and incarceration, which increases for those that have experienced foster care, human trafficking, juvenile justice involvement, and parental incarceration.

By working together, we have the opportunity to build a talent pipeline that replaces the prison pipeline and meaningfully addresses inequities in access to economic mobility. The prison pipeline is a disturbing national trend that refers to practices and policies in the public school system that disproportionately places students of color into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Students of color are particularly vulnerable to school pushout and the differential use of the exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspension and expulsion).

## Opportunity Youth of Color



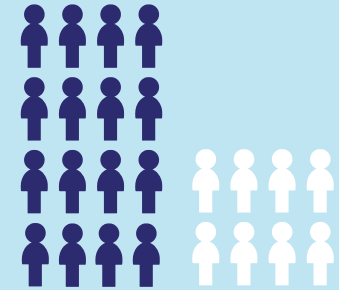
# Youth Most At-Risk of Incarceration

3,365 of 3,538 police departments examined **arrested black people** at a **higher rate** than other racial groups <sup>2</sup>

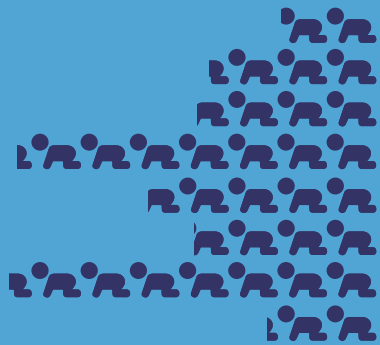


more than **5 million children** have had a **parent incarcerated** at some point in their lives. <sup>3</sup>

**black children** are about **twice as likely** to have an **incarcerated parent** as white children <sup>3</sup>



## Children with an incarcerated parent are: <sup>3</sup>



- 1.94 times more likely to **experience frequent socioeconomic hardship**
  - 3.30 times more likely to **experience parental divorce or separation\***
  - 3.77 times more likely to **experience parental death\***
  - 7.24 times more likely to be **witness or victim to domestic abuse**
  - 4.81 times more likely to be **witness or victim to neighborhood violence**
  - 3.86 times more likely to **live with a mentally ill or suicidal person**
  - 7.39 times more likely to **live with a person with a substance abuse problem**
  - 2.13 times more likely to **experience racial discrimination**
- than children who do not have an incarcerated parent \*of their resident parent

## Youth who receive an adult prison sentence: <sup>5</sup>

White youth

Hispanic youth are **40% more likely**

Native American youth almost **two times more likely**

Black youth are arrested at a rate of

**2.5X** <sup>6</sup>  
of statistical parity

It is unknown how many **minors** are **victims of trafficking** in the U.S. but estimates put the number in the **hundreds of thousands.**

**43%** of the trafficked minors we know about are **Black girls** <sup>7/</sup>

**Black children** comprise **53%** of all **juvenile prostitution arrests, victims** treated as perpetrators <sup>8</sup>



Black youth are **nine times more likely** than white youth to receive an adult prison sentence



# UP: A Diverse Ecosystem

**Unlock Potential** (UP) is a diverse ecosystem of national, state, and grassroots organizations, practitioners, and businesses focused on implementing data-informed and racially equitable approaches to workforce development for Opportunity Youth by:

- **Collaborating with community organizations to recruit youth candidates for the hiring program and provide wraparound services to support businesses and youth.**
- **Exploring the systemic issues that negatively affect disconnected youth and increasing access through education and employment.**
- **Building a framework and toolkit that will upskill candidates, community and workforce organizations, and employers and provide resources to support youth-engaged training and employment programs.**
- **Launching community pilots, especially programs with a strong emphasis on addressing the digital divide and technology gap for communities of color, STEM programs, and careers in the technology sector.**



## How Can You Help?

**Unlock Potential** UP is recruiting grassroots agencies, youth-led organizations, national and state agencies, workforce development providers, social impact foundations, and businesses, including minority and women-owned businesses.



To learn more, watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-5BjdS-WBvc> and visit, <https://perseverenow.org/>

**Organizations should register their interest by July 31, 2022, at [Survey Monkey](#). For additional information, contact Karen Walker at [instituteup@perseverenow.org](mailto:instituteup@perseverenow.org)**

# UP: The Hiring Program

- **The candidates are at the heart of the program; their success will measure our success.**
- **Employers will benefit by increasing diversity within their workforce and nurturing future Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) leaders.**
- **Increasing the economic mobility of previously underserved groups will create a profound social impact and benefit the community.**

Every participating business will be paired with a community partner who will provide wraparound services to candidates. We will create meaningful, fulfilling, and long-term careers for at-risk and overlooked young people through these partnerships between businesses and community groups.



# Disrupting the Prison Pipeline

The value of post-incarceration employment programs cannot be undervalued. However, to date, very few projects have focused their attention on how to prevent incarceration in the first place. Focusing on prevention measures versus corrective action allows us to disrupt cycles of incarceration before they take place.

Having a criminal record inhibits economic mobility. *The unemployment rate for formerly incarcerated people is currently 27 percent* - higher than it has ever been in history for the general population.

*One out of every three Black males born in the U.S. today can expect to spend time in prison* - resulting in Black men having the lowest labor force participation. When people—potential community leaders, talent, or customers—are lost to the criminal justice system, it hurts the whole community.

**Unlock Potential is designed to disrupt the prison pipeline by opening meaningful career opportunities early on.**

By increasing opportunities for alternative pathways, especially for young people of color who are most at-risk, we can create a positive, long-term impact in our communities and businesses. This will build a more prosperous and inclusive economy, enhance the quality of talent for employers, and disrupt a multi-generational cycle of poverty and justice involvement.



## How Can You Help?

**Unlock Potential** UP-hiring program is looking for businesses to participate in a design process with other major employers, experts, and community organizations. This will allow them to provide consultation and feedback on a hiring program that will work. In addition, participating companies are being asked to put that hiring program into practice for one year and collect data on its impact.



To learn more, watch <https://youtu.be/xBV9JnhjFyA>  
and visit, <https://www.unlock-potential.org/>

**Businesses should register their interest by May 31, 2022,  
by emailing Tiesa Leggett at [up@rbij.org](mailto:up@rbij.org)**

## Why We Need You

- 1) To disrupt unfair systems and help youth of color experience authentic inclusion with equitable access to resources and opportunities to thrive and reach their full potential.
- 2) To design solutions that align with on-the-ground experiences to strengthen systems and meet community needs.
- 3) To ensure youth voice is centered in our work because they are an essential part of the strategy and the solution.
- 4) To help advance equity and economic mobility and develop diverse pipelines of entry-level positions that lead to career pathways.



*By meeting our young people before they've had the chance to make mistakes with lifelong consequences, we can potentially save generations from the cycle through the criminal justice system.*

*Sean Hosman | Founder, Persevere*



<sup>1</sup><https://bit.ly/YouthDisconnection> <sup>2</sup><https://bit.ly/arrests-interactive> <sup>3</sup><https://bit.ly/ParentsBehindBars>  
<sup>4</sup><https://bit.ly/Americas-Children> <sup>5</sup><https://bit.ly/Juvenile-Arrest-Rates> <sup>6</sup><https://bit.ly/Domestic-Minor-Sex-Trafficking> <sup>7</sup><https://bit.ly/trafficking-and-black-girls>