

YEAR



URBANPEACE
MOVEMENT



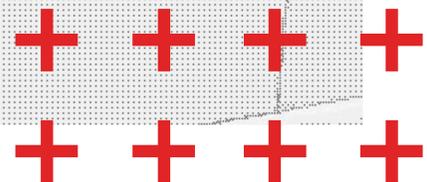
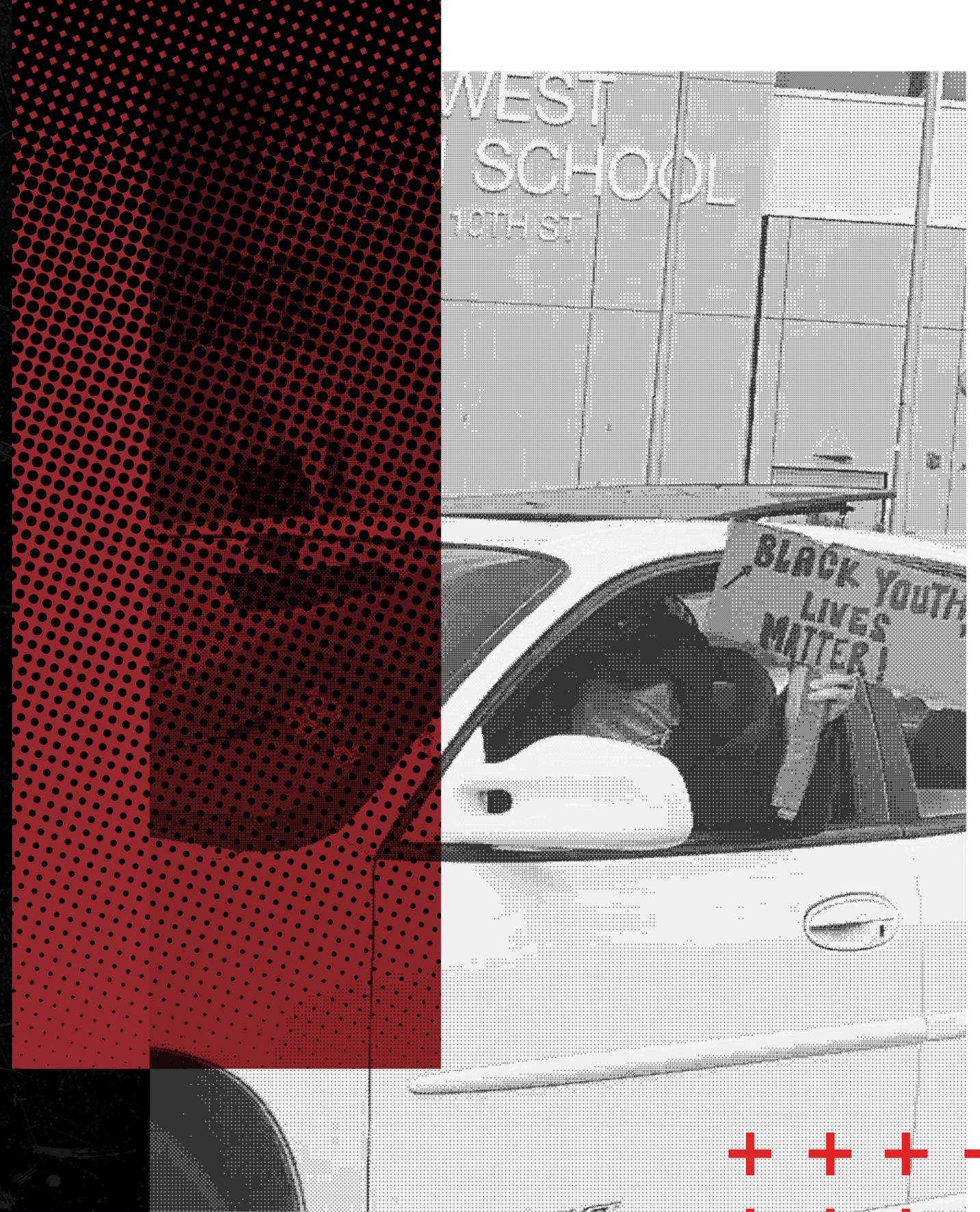
REVIEW

DECEMBER 2020

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

For Urban Peace Movement (UPM), as for all the world, the year 2020 presented unprecedented challenges. We were called, as were all community-based organizations, to respond to the wildly fluctuating needs of our communities in the face of a global pandemic, continued police killings of Black and Brown people, the subsequent influx of people to the movement to protect Black life (thought to be the largest social movement in American history), an alarming increase in community violence in our local neighborhoods, and a General Election fraught with voter suppression and racist rhetoric. With support from our donor and funder community, and grounded in our core mission of supporting the movement leadership of young people of color in our Oakland communities, UPM is happy to report that we were able to keep our momentum and we even won some victories including:

- Facilitating a coalition called “Free Our Kids” to push for a deep reimagining of Alameda County’s approach to youth justice to move away from punishment and incarceration and toward a care-first health-based approach. This year the coalition stopped a proposed \$75 million expenditure to rebuild Alameda County’s juvenile probation camp, Camp Sweeney, at 100 beds when the average population is 15 boys.
- In response to the major COVID-19 outbreak in the Alameda County Santa Rita Jail, UPM and our partners won the release of over 800 people from Santa Rita (approximately 33% of the population before COVID). We also pushed for improvements in conditions and access to information about the virus for those still incarcerated.
- Halting the DA’s Office from transferring three Alameda County youth to the adult system through our court-watching and DA Accountability tables.
- Supporting the statewide movement push to “Close DJJ the Right Way” in order to close California’s notoriously brutal youth prison system once and for all, resulting in the passage of SB 823.
- Attaining a public commitment from District Attorney Nancy O’Malley to reject campaign money from police departments in light of national calls for racial justice in the wake of the brutal killing of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis Police.



UPM'S PANDEMIC RESPONSE

When COVID-19 arrived in Alameda County, UPM and our allies pivoted quickly to pressure County Officials such as the District Attorney, the Probation Department, and the Juvenile Courts to release people inside detention facilities early and to implement policies and protections for those who had not yet been released. Since spring of this year, there have been many alarming outbreaks of the virus in jails, prisons, and other detention facilities throughout the country. Here in Alameda County, there have been dozens of confirmed cases in Santa Rita jail as well as at least one positive test of a youth in juvenile hall.

We have also transitioned as much as our work as possible to video and conference calls as we shelter-in-place. And, we have worked to respond to the basic needs of the families and youth that we work with.

Through an early push via letters of request to system stakeholders, UPM and our partners, (including the Young Women's Freedom Center, the Ella Baker Center, Restore Oakland, CURYJ, East Bay Community Law Center, the Justice Reinvestment Coalition and others) secured regular virtual meetings with Chief of Probation Wendy Still and Presiding Juvenile Judge Ursula Jones Dickson, District Attorney Nancy O'Malley, and Public Defender Brendon Woods. These engagements enabled UPM and our allies to continue the thread of accountability for demands issued before the pandemic and to remain in close contact with these officials as we push for new demands to increase safety for incarcerated people in the county during this health crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has surfaced the urgency of pressing for the immediate release of as many incarcerated people as possible. This emergency points to how inhumane and unsustainable the practice of mass incarceration is in the first place. While this crisis is costing lives, time, and valuable resources from all affected, we have moved quickly to protect and advocate for those most vulnerable within the system and we will continue to do so as long as the pandemic lasts. This painfully clear example of how justice system harms are exacerbated in such crises underscores the necessity of the demands we have already been advancing. ■



PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS

YOUTH ORGANIZING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

UPM was able to continue both our youth organizing programs, “Leaders in Training” (LIT), and our Determination program for young Black men. UPM also facilitates a South Alameda County Resident Leadership Committee which conducts community outreach and community organizing meetings addressing criminal justice reform in the unincorporated areas of Alameda County. We have had to run our programming virtually since mid-March but have continued to engage our youth members on a regular basis even in these ongoing extraordinary circumstances. Our program participants are meeting, learning together, building their organizing skills, and building community with each other. We’ve also been working with young people and their families to support them in more direct ways during the pandemic, including supplying gift cards, groceries and other difficult to obtain supplies (baby formula, PPE, paper goods, hand sanitizer, etc.), air purifiers, and other kinds of direct support.

POLICY CHANGE & CAMPAIGNS

UPM is at the forefront of winning meaningful victories toward our ultimate goal of ending mass incarceration with a focus on Alameda County. In partnership with the Alameda County Public Defender’s Office and allied community groups over the past two years, UPM has worked to implement participatory defense and court-watching programs to uphold our wins and make possible more expansive decarceration victories. And, as stated above, UPM helps to coordinate a coalition of a dozen grassroots organizations fighting for a deep reimagining of our county’s overall approach to juvenile justice.



2020 HIGHLIGHTS

DA ACCOUNTABILITY CAMPAIGN

UPM's DA Accountability Campaign is central to our efforts to decarcerate Alameda County and reimagine public safety, as the DA's Office holds a great deal of discretion that impacts both youth and adults. In 2020, we met regularly with Alameda County DA Nancy O'Malley and her staff to address the disparities in race and class in DA charging and plea negotiations and raise community concerns about prosecutorial practices. As a result of our efforts and our partners at the ACLU submitting a public records request, the DA's office released 2017 and 2018 data for all cases processed by the DA's office, including demographics and the frequency with which specific charges were brought against both youth and adults. Court watching efforts in 2019 produced additional data consistent with public records results. UPM is currently co-authoring a white paper with the ACLU of Northern California to address our analysis of this data and make recommendations for criminal justice system reforms based on our findings. The report will be released in early 2020.

ZERO-CASH BAIL SCHEDULE

In April 2020, the California Judicial Council made emergency amendments to the Rules of Court including an emergency Zero-Cash Bail Schedule (with 13 charging exceptions) to reduce jail populations during the pandemic. Through our sustained advocacy and organizing around DA Accountability, as well as our relationships with the Public Defender's Office and Presiding Judge, UPM helped secure the local continuation of the emergency zero-bail schedule in Alameda County after the Judicial Council terminated the emergency changes statewide in August. Alameda County currently has the strongest zero-bail policy of the five counties that kept the policy in place.

FREE OUR KIDS COALITION

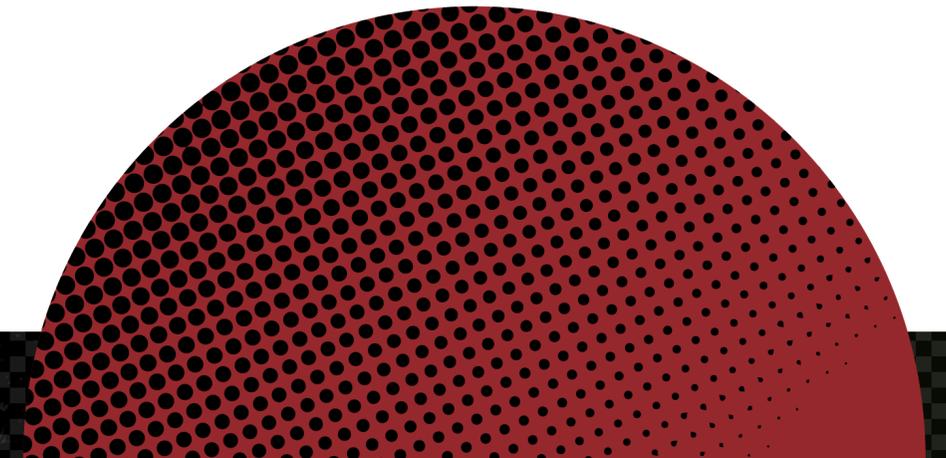
The "Free Our Kids" Coalition came together over a year ago to stop a proposed \$75 million expenditure to rebuild Alameda County's juvenile probation camp, Camp Sweeney, at 100 beds when the average population is 15 boys. A dozen local organizations work together to comprise this coalition including, UPM, the East Bay Community Law Center, the Youth Law Center, the Young Women's Freedom Center, GENESIS, CURYJ, the Ella Baker Center, Restore Oakland, the W. Haywood Burns Institute, the Justice Reinvestment Coalition of Alameda County, and 67 Suenos. The coalition raised awareness and concern about this proposal in the community in January and February before the pandemic hit, and as a result we were successful in defeating the \$75 million proposal during the June county budget process. We are now pivoting to push the County to create a community-led process to rethink the County's overarching approach to juvenile justice to move away from incarceration and toward community-based alternatives. We recently participated in a two-day community virtual forum held by County Supervisor Richard Valle and Chief Probation Officer Wendy Still and provided speakers and content to the program. And we have submitted a proposal for the county to create a Reimagining Juvenile Justice Working-group including a majority of community members as well as a range of county agencies and stakeholders to do a deep reimagining of the county's approach to supporting young people including those with more serious offenses and those who are in the system for more minor offenses.

COURT WATCHING

Building on our 2019 pilot program, UPM conducted a four-week court-watching program in October of 2020 in which eight volunteers observed court proceedings daily to determine the extent to which line prosecutors continue to push for setting bail despite the emergency order. Since October we have built up our capacity, through training volunteer community members, to observe court proceedings at least one day per week year-round and ensure that the DA's public policies and commitments are actually implemented in court.

PARTICIPATORY DEFENSE

UPM co-founded the Alameda County Participatory Defense Hub in 2019. We support and train family members of individuals charged with crimes to advocate for their loved ones during the court process. Since the beginning of the pandemic, UPM has secured improved outcomes for at least seven individual's cases through our participatory defense efforts and advocacy to DA O'Malley, including preventing the transfer of three youth into the adult system, supporting three young people who were being denied access to alternatives to incarceration (such as community-based diversion programs and mental health services), and supporting a community member to advocate on his own behalf for the reduction of an unduly harsh sentence of 8 years in prison for a non-violent offense.



COMMUNITY HEALING INITIATIVE

UPM's Community Healing Initiative, which is currently focused on work in West Oakland, aims to provide access to culturally competent healing practices and support to communities of color most impacted by trauma and gun violence. We give support and assist with grief circles for families and friends who have lost loved ones. To continue providing support in this time when community members are isolated from their loved ones physically, UPM is hosting biweekly virtual healing circles that are open to the public and create a virtual space for healing through mindfulness, somatics, and other modalities. Since we cannot hold our flagship healing and wellness festivals, "Scratch & Fade" because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are being more creative about how to engage community members while staying safe and socially distant. We have been passing out PPE to the community. We are printing masks with anti-violence messages on them that we will give out to community members in December. And with the significant uptick in violence in recent months, UPM will be coordinating a socially distant community vigil to call for peace at the beginning of the new year.



LOOKING AHEAD

In 2021, UPM will continue to be responsive to the needs of our community as conditions continue to shift. We look forward to resuming in-person programs and organizing when it is safe to do so again, and we'll continue to support our youth members and their families until the pandemic ends. We'll continue pushing on the DA's office to hold them accountable through court watching and participatory defense; advocating for a permanent zero-cash bail schedule; organizing to keep kids out of the adult system; and helping people who have long-term sentences to expedite the process of re-sentencing. UPM will build on our recent win of defeating the \$75 million Camp Sweeney re-build proposal by pressing Alameda County system stakeholders to rethink the juvenile justice system in partnership with community members in order to ensure that statewide DJJ closures (per SB823) do not simply transfer system problems from the state level to the county level and to move young people with lesser charges into community-based alternatives. Our goal will be to advocate for and win something better than the current system for all of our young people--with resources allocated such that youth have their needs met, have access to rehabilitation, and have the opportunity to be served in the community rather than in detention or jail facilities.

One threat we face in 2021 is the reduction of city funding for our community healing work. Because the city is facing budget shortfalls due to the economic effects of the pandemic, they are having to make significant budget cuts in several areas. One area which is being proposed to be cut is the Community Healing program under the city's violence prevention plan from which UPM received a significant two-year grant in the past. This area of work is critical now more than ever and will continue to be critical as our communities begin to recover from the pandemic. We'll continue to advocate for city funding for this important work, but we will also be looking to external sources such as major donors and foundations to help fill this gap.

We are deeply appreciative of your support for Urban Peace Movement's youth and community leadership development programs, policy and systems change campaigns, and community healing initiative. Through our partnership, UPM has advanced healing and safety for our youth and our communities. Thank you for your steadfast support in this endeavor. ■

