

- U R B A N P E A C E M O V E M E N T -

The

# YEAR IN REVIEW

## 2021



# The Year in Review 2021

In 2021, Urban Peace Movement organized with youth of color and community members impacted by mass incarceration and community violence and pushed systems leaders to reimagine youth justice and public safety. We leveraged the power of youth organizing, community partnership, and coalition building to achieve powerful outcomes including:

- In January, UPM administered a survey about safety to 241 Black men from East and West Oakland. The findings of the survey helped result in the doubling of violence prevention funding within the City of Oakland.
- UPM took leadership in and helped to coordinate the Free Our Kids Coalition to influence the local implementation of SB-823 and to push for a deep reimagining of Alameda County's juvenile justice system.
- Our court watching program deployed over a dozen volunteers to monitor the practices of the Alameda County District Attorney's office during court proceedings, reviewing over 200 cases.
- We released a report in March 2021 in partnership with the ACLU of Northern California called "In(Justice) in Alameda County: A Case for Reform and Accountability." The report details the practices of the Alameda County District Attorney's Office and how they have contributed to over-criminalization and mass incarceration.
- Our participatory defense efforts in 2021 resulted in several improved court outcomes for community members, including helping one community member to avoid an unjust eight-year prison sentence.
- We hosted an event series called the "Oakland Family Check-Ins" to provide healing and support to community members who have been impacted by rising community violence.
- UPM held a series of events in West Oakland called "Town Nights" as part of a larger violence prevention strategy across the city.





# Programmatic Highlights 2021

## ORGANIZING TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM

***Freeing Our Kids and Reimagining Youth Justice*** - UPM plays a leadership role in Free Our Kids (FOK), a coalition of a dozen grassroots organizations that are fighting for the transformation of Alameda County's juvenile justice system to move away from punishment and incarceration and toward healing and restoration. In 2021, our coalition monitored the County's process to implement SB-823 which closed California's state youth prison system, the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), while we simultaneously devised a long-term strategy to radically reimagine the county's overall approach to youth justice and community safety. The Free Our Kids Coalition has two goals:

- 1. Fighting for racial justice and healing in the process to close DJJ** - Alameda County is set to receive millions of dollars from the State of California in the coming months to serve youth who would have otherwise been sent to DJJ in a new local program. This year the county convened the JJCC Subcommittee to create the plan for that new program. Despite claims about wanting to take a trauma-informed approach, the Alameda County Probation Department strongly defended the use of prone restraints (such as the chokehold which killed George Floyd) and pepper spray against children in the JJCC Subcommittee's planning process. FOK members gathered over 1,000 signatures on an online petition, over 120 hand signed letters from residents, as well as letters from clergy and other community leaders in support of the eradication of these abusive and traumatizing practices. As a result, a majority of Subcommittee members lined up in opposition to Probation's stance and voted in favor of language to stop the use of pepper spray and prone restraints in the SB-823 realignment plan. In addition, we also won on a number of other issues including: language that outlines the need to create a process to reimagine the whole youth justice system, commitments to pay youth for work and to make funds available to incentivize youth to meet personal goals, a commitment for gender equity in the plan, language that creates a Youth Bill of Rights, as well as language that commits the Subcommittee to create clear step down options for youth to transition out incarceration. As a result of the organizing work of Free Our Kids, Alameda County's SB-823 realignment plan is among the strongest in the state!
- 2. Pushing the Board of Supervisors to reimagine the county's overall approach to youth justice** - We are demanding that Alameda County go beyond just the SB-823 realignment plan and create a community-led process to reimagine the entire juvenile justice system. This process must center the voices of system-involved youth and their families. Youth from FOK member organizations are creating a "10 Point Program to Reimagine Youth Justice," in order to set forth their vision. The youth will present their platform to the broader community and decision-makers through artistic and cultural mediums in the coming months.



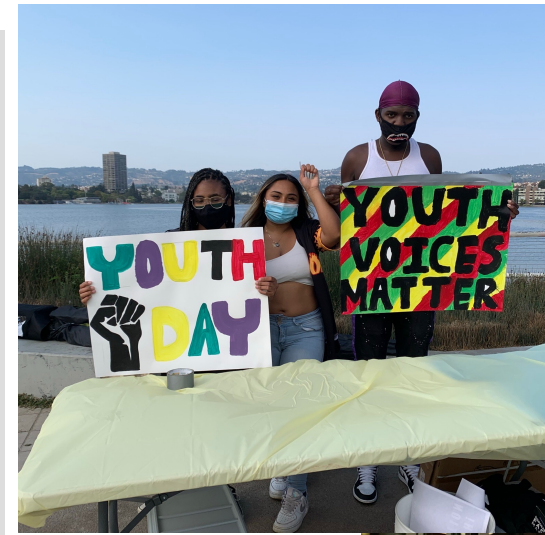
**Reimagining Public Safety in Oakland** - In addition to our work in the Free Our Kids Coalition, UPM has been engaged in the City of Oakland's Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce. In 2021, UPM joined the Defund OPD Coalition and mobilized to City Taskforce meetings. In early 2021, UPM's community healing team surveyed 241 Black men from Oakland about how safe they feel in their community and their attitudes towards OPD. The survey was conducted anonymously. Of the total number of respondents, 62% were between the ages of 19-35 and 74% were from East Oakland specifically. UPM's survey found that 87% of respondents felt that Oakland is an unsafe place for Black men and 87% of respondents said that they feel less safe when they see OPD. When asked what they thought was needed to create real safety in Oakland, respondents rated jobs, housing, and violence prevention programs as their top three priorities. This survey offered a powerful and authentic response to a false narrative fueled by the Mayor's Office and OPD that criticisms of the police were only supported by white activist groups. While the City and the whole country continues to debate the idea of "defunding the police," UPM's organizing on these issues has already contributed to a doubling of Oakland's violence prevention fund in the upcoming fiscal year from a proposed \$8 million to over \$16 million.





**DA Accountability & Court Watching** - UPM continues to anchor the DA Accountability Table within the Justice Reinvestment Coalition, and we coordinate monthly meetings with our coalition partners and families of directly impacted people with DA Nancy O'Malley. This year the DA Accountability Table has:

- Advanced a demand that the Alameda County DA's Office agree to a moratorium on the practice of transferring youth into adult court - a practice which disproportionately impacts Black children and other BIPOC youth.
- Released a report in March in partnership with the ACLU of Northern California called "[In\(Justice\) in Alameda County: A Case for Reform and Accountability](#)" detailing the practices of the Alameda County District Attorney's Office and how these practices have contributed to over-criminalization and mass incarceration.
- Conducted a court watching program to monitor Alameda County court proceedings to better understand the practices and tendencies of the DA's Office.
- Hosted two virtual town hall meetings in consecutive weeks in May, one with DA O'Malley and one with Chief Public Defender Brendon Woods, with over 85 people participating in each town hall.
- Created space in our monthly meetings with the DA's Office for families from our Participatory Defense Hub to speak directly with DA O'Malley on behalf of their loved ones who are being prosecuted by her office.



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# SUSTAINING OUR COMMUNITY

**Community Healing and Culture Change** - UPM's healing justice work in West and East Oakland aims to provide access to culturally competent healing practices and mental health supports to communities of color most impacted by gun violence and incarceration. Healing plays an integral role in UPM's work to support and sustain our staff and members in community organizing efforts as well as in modeling community safety strategies that can serve as alternatives to incarceration and criminalization.

- On May 10th, 2021, UPM youth members held our 6th annual 510 Day. This year, because of COVID, we organized a car caravan and a small gathering at the Lake Merritt Amphitheater. The event, an annual community pride and resilience block party to celebrate Oakland's unique culture and history, was attended by 200 people.
- UPM held several socially distanced/outdoor Silence the Violence vigils, starting in February, to call for peace, unity, and justice in Oakland in response to an increase in community violence. The vigils are intended to build unity and honor those lost to violence.
- In response to a horrific shooting that occurred at a children's sporting event in East Oakland in late February, UPM supported a group of East Oakland residents from Brookfield and Sobrante Park to plan and host a virtual healing event and in-person healing and wellness festival called the "Oakland Family Check-in." The virtual check-in, held in July, created space for community members to support one another in healing. Over 85 people attended via Zoom. In August, the group organized an in-person "Family Check-In" event at Cherry Grove Park in San Leandro (a park frequented by residents of Deep East Oakland). Over 250 community members attended. The free festival featured local musicians and DJs, food, healing modalities (including massage, cupping, manicures, and healing circles), and information to connect residents to community resources.
- Throughout the pandemic, UPM has hosted virtual healing events including: A) Heal-R-Town, a bi-weekly intergenerational healing circle featuring art, meditation, sound healing, and more; B) Monthly Free the People Fridays, virtual block parties that also create space for youth voices and discussion of important local justice system issues; and C) the Determination Black Men's Group, a brotherhood circle for systems-impacted and/or formerly incarcerated young Black men (ages 16-25). The group meets regularly to foster leadership development, social justice education, cultural healing, and a sense of community.
- UPM is working with West Oakland grassroots community groups including the Khadafy Foundation and the Hoover-Foster Resident Action Council to organize eight events around the holiday season for the West Oakland community. The event series, called "Town Nights" is in partnership with the City of Oakland's Department of Violence Prevention and will include family fun nights, a turkey dinner give-away, and a holiday toy give away.



**POWER  
TO THE  
PEOPLE**





**Participatory Defense** - UPM has been working for the past two years with the Young Women's Freedom Center, Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, and All of Us or None to successfully create the Alameda County Participatory Defense Hub, to support community members as they advocate for their loved one who are facing prosecution in the criminal legal system. The participatory defense model was developed by our partners at Silicon Valley De-Bug. Through the hub, family members and loved ones of those facing prosecution learn about the ins and outs of the legal system and become empowered to advocate for their loved ones during the pre-trial and trial processes. UPM's participatory defense work has dramatically improved justice system outcomes for several community members facing prosecution. For example, UPM supported the family of a man who was given an offer of an eight-year prison sentence for a robbery in which no one was physically present. Through his family's advocacy and support, his case was resolved in such a way that he was only required to serve 30 days in county jail and accept a term of probation. He has since been released and is a member of the Determination Black Men's Group.



# URBAN PEACE MOVEMENT

## *LOOKING AHEAD*

In 2022, Urban Peace Movement will continue to respond to the needs of our communities and work to push systems leaders to move away from punishment and criminalization and toward systems that place care first and that center healing and restoration. We look forward to building a strong and united social justice movement and working to unlock the power of our communities. Thank you for your continued support of our work!!

WORKING  
TOGETHER