



MY VOICE MATTERS

MI VOZ IMPORTA

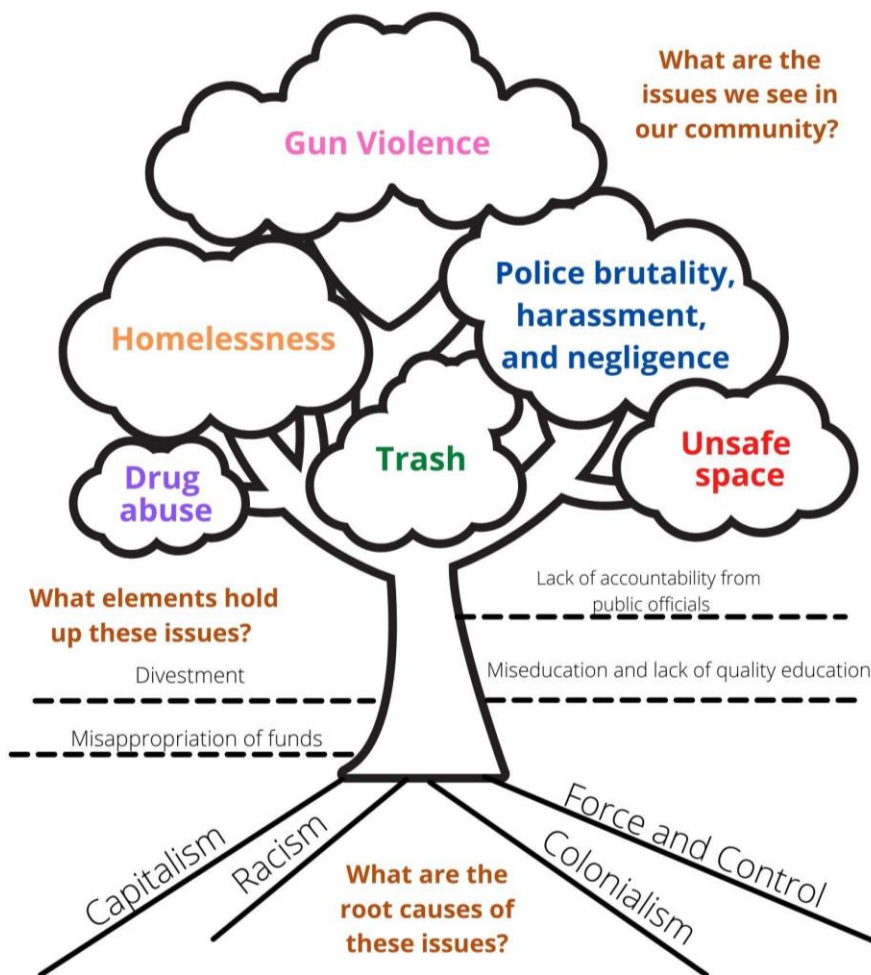
Young people from Kensington and Fairhill are calling on our community to stand together in solidarity for safer and more equitable neighborhoods

Since 2018, three local nonprofits – HACE CDC, Impact Services, and New Kensington CDC – have been working with community partners, resident leaders, and the 24th District Philadelphia Police to build trust, reduce crime, and advocate for the Fairhill and Kensington communities. The collaboration, known as We CAN (Change & Action Now), is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice and supported by researchers at Rutgers-Camden.

The sessions for this project were planned and facilitated by Creative Praxis. These findings were brought together by a group of young people, aged 14-24, in a series of conversations and focus group sessions about creating safer, more equitable communities in Kensington and Fairhill, and beyond.

Young people identified some of the issues they see and experience in their communities that are unsafe on an individual, cultural, and institutional level. Youth identified issues that must be addressed at a systemic level with consideration of the history of policing and media bias. While communities are blamed on an individual level for their challenges, the fractures are actually the result of policies, actions, and inaction that have been led intentionally by people in power. The image at right illustrates what young people articulated.

A full report with session findings and youth recommendations will be available at NKCDC.org/we-can in Summer 2021.



Recommendations

INVESTMENT

- Housing—Prioritize mixed-income housing and slow gentrification by ending the current practice of using land to fit developers' interests
- Education—Distribute funds for education equally across the city and state with an investment in a whole-child approach and the hiring of black teachers and teachers of color to work with young people
- Jobs—Create more meaningful entry-level jobs that teach useful skills and prepare people for the future
- Restorative Practice—Provide alternatives to the punitive court system that prioritizes community wholeness and harmony over punishment. In schools, replace police officers with restorative councils
- Mental Health—Provide mental health resources within communities, replacing the excessive presence of law enforcement that currently removes and criminalizes people with mental illnesses

TRAINING

- Train police officers in trauma-informed practices, anti-racism, de-escalation and mediation, mental health, and bias while also supporting laws that protect communities of color from harm and violence. Additional training is crucial in that police officers only receive 760 hours of training which is extremely low given the severity of their jobs (cosmetologist require 1,250 minimum training hours to become a licensed hairstylist in PA)
- Train local community members in de-escalation and conflict resolution
- Train community members and police officers on the history of policing and how policing works on an individual, cultural, and institutional level so that they can actualize concrete plans to put alternative methods in place

We have the right to live.

We demand a pilot program as an alternative to policing.

We demand investment in housing, education, mental health resources, and a divestment from police.

We can, as young people, take initiative and be on the front lines to educate community members, city officials, educators, and other leaders in our community.

We can make a difference.

COMMUNITY AND POLICE

- Lessen police presence in neighborhoods to address the historical over-surveillance of black and brown bodies
- Require all police officers to do community service in the district in which they serve and work with residents to co-create plans that address issues within the community
- Create public forums for community members to self-determine the safety measures that they deem necessary for protection and revitalization
- Provide additional funds for grassroots organizations and local efforts that promote job security, housing access, mental health wellness, and equitable education
- Offer 'Know Your Rights' training so that people know how to protect themselves against police that don't honor communities rights and the criminal legal system
- Offer counseling for community members traumatized by racial injustice and institutional police violence

“Media treats our community badly, calling people of color in poor neighborhoods thugs. The police are seeing that. From a community and worldwide standpoint, they treat them as thugs.”

ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES FOR POLICE

- Involve community members in the training, hiring, incident reporting, and community relations
- Create a police mentoring/internship program to recruit new officers from the community
- Empower community members to thoroughly review community-based policies and create clear pathways of enforcement measures for new policies
- Require body cameras to be used unconditionally and turned over to people not affiliated with the police