



African American Youth and the Juvenile Court System

Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) Position Statement on the Treatment of African American Youth:

- All children deserve to be treated fairly, regardless of race or ethnicity.
- Policy makers, police officials, officers of the court and correctional providers must work together to remove racial inequities from the juvenile court system.
- CJJ supports the core requirement in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act that compels states to identify and remove racial inequality among incarcerated young offenders.

The Facts on African American Youth and Delinquency:

- African American youth comprise 15.4% of the national youth population.¹
- The arrest rate among African American youth (ages 10-17) was nearly twice the rate of their white peers.²
- African American youth are 1.4 times more likely to be detained than their white peers; among all racial groups, whites are the least likely to be detained.³
- Nationwide, one of every three young black males is in prison, on probation or on parole.⁴
- Nationwide, young black offenders are more than twice as likely to be transferred to adult court than their white counterparts.⁵
- White youth are twice as likely to be defended by private attorneys as African American youth, and young offenders who are represented by private attorneys are less likely to be convicted and less likely to be transferred to adult court.⁶
- Nearly 60% of young offenders serving time in adult state prisons are African American, although African Americans comprise only 15% of the youth population.⁷
- Although minorities make up one-third of the total U.S. youth population, they make up nearly two-thirds of the young offenders behind bars.⁸

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Public Information Office: *Nation's Population One-Third Minority*, Washington, DC, May 10, 2006.

² Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book*, Washington, DC, September 08, 2006.

³ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*, Washington, DC, 2006.

⁴ Marc Mauer, The Sentencing Project, *Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later*, Washington DC, 1995.

⁵ Building Blocks for Youth, *Youth Crime/Adult Time: Is Justice Served*, Washington, DC, October 26, 2000.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*, Washington, DC, 2006.