

Learning Rights Law Center Condemns the Systemic Violence and Racism Faced By Black Communities

Learning Rights Law Center was founded on the principle that students are entitled to a fair and just public education. We are committed to being anti-racist and will continue to enhance our understanding and learning to work for diversity and inclusion. We also stand against the brutality Black students face in our public schools at the hands of police and in the classroom. Black lives matter to staff and board of Learning Rights Law Center.

Discrimination is very real for Black students; some are unjustly expelled, suspended, charged, and entered into the court system before they are teens. Research published by the National Academy of Sciences in 2019 found that Black students are expelled, suspended, and disciplined at rates three times those of White students. Learning Rights has observed this first-hand: we have a 13-year-old client who planned a simple prank. He took the street clothes from another student's locker so the other student would have to attend school the rest of his day in his gym clothes. The prank was inappropriate, the appropriate response would have been for the school to discipline our client. Yet, school officials instead called the police. Alarmingly, our client was arrested at school, taken out in handcuffs, and charged with burglary. This is the same client who had previously been called the "n" word at school and told by the principal to just get over it. It is clear to us that, if he were White, he would not have been arrested for this prank or be told to endure racial epithets at school. While he had an attorney who advocated for him, there are many other students without advocates who are improperly disciplined and stigmatized.

Black students face an additional injustice because the special educational system fails to identify their learning needs at the same rate as other students. Often, this manifests as a delay in identifying disabilities or mislabeling Black students as "emotionally disturbed." Students of color with disabilities also suffer violence and trauma at a disproportionate rate. When police are involved, officers are often improperly trained in deescalating encounters involving people with disabilities in distress, which tends to exacerbate the trauma.

There is no justice while the unequal treatment of students of color continues. Systemic issues need to be addressed.

By providing counsel and advice, trainings, education and advocacy Learning Rights Law Center fights for systemic change in racially unjust educational environments.
