

*The Tow Youth Justice Institute is a university, state and private partnership established to lead the way in juvenile justice reform through collaborative planning, training, research and advocacy.*

## Upcoming JJPOC Meetings:

JJPOC Meetings are the third Thursday of every month at 2 p.m., at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford.

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## New Juvenile Justice Club Launches on Campus



Tow Youth Justice Institute Intern Richard Concepcion wanted to educate students on campus about the issues juveniles face in their lives. He decided to start a Juvenile Justice Club to

help raise awareness. He began the process to create an official club on campus and their first meeting was held on April 8th. As President and Founder, he and his other officers recruited 32 members to date. The Vice President of External Affairs is Kelsey Novak, the Secretary is Meagan McClintock, the Treasurer is Kailyn Lambert and the Sergeant at Arms in Meredith Burkhart. The Coordinator of Events is Natalia Miasek and the Coordinator of Community Service is Bridget McEvilly. The Tow Youth Justice Institute congratulates Richie and his new Club!

## Huge News for Connecticut!

The State of Connecticut has been chosen by the Council of State Governments to receive technical assistance for a Justice Reinvestment Plan. On February 20-21, 2019, The Council of State Governments (CSG) conducted focus groups with key stakeholders from Connecticut to learn more about the state's juvenile justice system with the specific goal of identifying challenges and opportunities for reducing recidivism and improving other outcomes for youth. CSG Justice Center staff met with Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee leadership, judicial and probation leadership and line staff, judges, service providers, research staff, attorneys, detention and Department of Correction leadership and staff, advocates, and other stakeholders to better understand what is working well, identify potential areas for improvement, and discuss the Improving Outcomes for Youth (IOYouth) Initiative.

While the Connecticut juvenile justice system possesses numerous strengths, including an emphasis on the use and implementation of evidence-based practices

and programs, the implementation of a homegrown risk assessment tool, and closure of the state's secure juvenile facility, the information they gleaned from their visits uncovered several challenges and opportunities to better align system policies, practices, and funding with what the research shows works to improve outcomes for youth:



**The Council of State Governments**

**Key Challenge #1:** Connecticut is experiencing challenges in matching and providing youth with the most appropriate supervision and services.

**Key Challenge #2:** Connecticut has a robust array of programs and services for justice involved youth, but accessibility challenges persist. There are also gaps in services for specialized populations, and limited resources are available to support youth being served in the community under probation or diversion.

**Key Challenge #3:** Connecticut's youth serving agencies operate in silos, making collaboration, coordination, and data sharing a challenge.

Over the last few years, Connecticut's juvenile justice system has adopted and implemented significant policy changes, positioning the state as a leader and example for other jurisdictions around the country. However, due to the

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number of initiatives and improvement efforts undertaken in succession over a short period of time, the full impact of the reforms, both positive and negative, have yet to be fully identified or evaluated. CSG found Connecticut to be a perfect candidate to undergo an assessment to try to better understand the full scope of the population of youth entering the juvenile justice system, how youth are being supervised and served in the system, and how youth are faring as a result of current supervision and service policies and practices.

Additionally, understanding how resources are being allocated to various parts of the juvenile justice continuum, given recent policy changes, would be beneficial to developing a future plan to use resources more efficiently and to enact additional policy changes to improve outcomes for youth.

The Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee recommendations last year led to legislation (P.A. 18-31) mandating that by January 1, 2020, the JJPOC shall report on a Justice Reinvestment Plan that will allow for the reinvestment of a portion of the savings from the decreased use of incarceration and congregate care programming to become strategic investments in home, school and community based behavioral health services for children diverted from the juvenile justice system. Connecticut Voices for Children has been a partner in the early work leading up to this justice reinvestment initiative.

A Task Force of 22 Leaders in Juvenile Justice has been formed to oversee this 18 month endeavor. A list of the members can be found at [newhaven.edu/towyouth](http://newhaven.edu/towyouth) and click on the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee link.

The kickoff of the Council of State Governments Justice Center Improving Outcomes for Youth (IOYouth) Initiative in Connecticut is June 11th at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford with a Press Conference at 10 a.m.!

## Transforming Youth Justice Leadership Development Program kicks off its fourth Cohort!



April 12th marked the start of Cohort Four with 15 new leaders coming together for the first time. The diversity of our fourth Cohort includes non-profit organizations, probation, law enforcement, public schools, municipal staff and State Agencies such as the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Corrections, and the Judicial Branch/CSSD. This diverse group of professionals came together for an Orientation on April 12th to learn more about the Transforming Youth Justice Leadership Development Program and how to prepare for their journey through this nine-month program that will help shape them into effective reformers in the State of Connecticut.

During the Orientation, Tow Youth Justice Institute Executive Director, William H. Carbone led a presentation on the history and current trajectory of juvenile justice reform in the State of Connecticut. The cohort leaders learned about recent changes to juvenile justice legislation and where the state is headed as we continue in this work. He explained the importance of juvenile justice and what we can do to help divert children from interaction with the system to become productive members of our community. This presentation also emphasized that real reform starts with the leaders participating in this program.

Participation in the Transforming Youth Justice Leadership Development Program increases visibility, and links individuals from a wide range of organizations, and regional/state networks to state and national level juvenile justice system changes. The program creates safe spaces for learning and critical reflection on a developmental approach to juvenile justice (e.g. adolescent brain research), the use of best practices (family outreach and active engagement), and tools for measuring results (Results-Based Accountability and data-driven decisions). The curriculum is intended to ensure a current and future workforce of youth justice leaders who are committed, competent and passionate about making the system work effectively and support positive change for all young people in every community.

## Events on Campus at the University of New Haven



### Honorable Richard A. Robinson, Chief Justice of the CT Supreme Court

The Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice and Forensic Sciences was honored to have the Honorable Richard A. Robinson, Chief Justice of the CT Supreme Court visit the University of New Haven on Friday, February 1st as a kickoff to Black History Month. Chief Justice Robinson addressed Social Justice, a highest priority area for the University and our students. Dr. Danielle Cooper facilitated a question and answer session on Social Justice issues of race, gender, and equality.

The college coordinated the event with the Tow Youth Justice Institute, the Myatt Center on Diversity and Inclusion, the Criminal Justice Department, the National Security Department, the Political Science Department, the Legal Studies Program and Student Clubs associated with these majors.

### Akeem Browder, Social Justice Advocate

Since the fall of 2018, when the Youth in Justice and the Kalief Browder course launched, students have been requesting for more speakers on justice topics. On April 2nd, Akeem Browder, brother of Kalief Browder, during his visit to the University of New Haven, he first addressed students on "How to Live a Civic Life". Among other things, he discussed how the death of his brother Kalief Browder impacted him, his community, New York, and the rest of the nation. He later held a Q&A in the Myatt Center for Diversity and Inclusion where he took questions from students on a broad array of topics. Students from the fall and spring courses attended the day's activities and had this to say:

"Akeem was super down-to-earth and approachable. I was able to show Akeem my final project from Dr. Cooper's "Youth Injustice & The Kalief Browder" Story Course. I think there were two solid takeaways from the day. The first is that anything is possible if you put your mind to it. The second takeaway was to be the change you seek to see in the world. To see the work that Akeem and countless others on his team are doing is more than admirable. This experience definitely reassured me of the path I hope to pursue after graduation and I am forever grateful to have been able to attend." - *Tatiana Gay*

"What surprised me most was the fact that juvenile facilities are not actually getting rid of solitary confinement; they are just changing the name of what is considered solitary confinement in their facilities and getting around the law which prohibits solitary confinement for juveniles. My key takeaway was that anyone can be an activist and make a change in the world." - *Alli Cole*

"Overall I was extremely shocked that the United States prison system treats some of their inmates how Kalief Browder was treated. It is extremely sad. One key take away from the session is that we, young adults especially, need to start pushing for a change. We can't let this happen to more children." - *Bridget McEvilly*

"What surprised me is how he and his family are still struggling in a way after the loss of Kalief and his mother. When he talked about his brother I found it interesting how he's able to be an activist, but also deal with his family still healing." - *Jordan Harris*



### Akeem Browder

Social Justice Advocate and Agent of Change, President of the Kalief Browder Foundation

**Tuesday, April 2nd**

Please join us for the following events:

**11:00 AM-** "How to Live a Civic Life" at Bucknall Theater

**2:00 PM-** Q&A Session with Akeem Browder at the Myatt Center for Diversity and Inclusion

**Open to ALL Faculty, Staff and Students**

**Presented By:**  
Tow Youth Justice Institute  
Henry C. Lee College  
University of New Haven



## Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

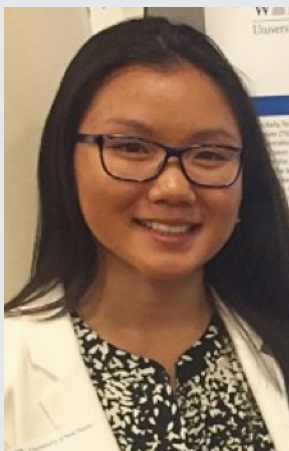
The Tow Youth Justice Institute, along with the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA) and the Connecticut Youth Services Association (CYSA) came together in the summer of 2018 to discuss an opportunity to apply for OJJDP funds for work to deinstitutionalize status offenders and address disproportionate minority contact in the State of Connecticut. The University of New Haven, in collaboration with CCA and CYSA, applied for a grant to support "Achieving Positive Youth Outcomes for Safer and Healthier Communities". The Cooperative Agreement of \$438,246 was awarded to the University on September 30, 2018. Work will begin in the Spring of 2019 on the three-year grant.

The success of deinstitutionalizing status offenders is contingent upon the effective implementation of diversionary strategies. The Community-Based Diversion System Plan, codified in legislation in 2018, provides a roadmap for developmentally appropriate, community-based responses to divert children and youth from the juvenile justice system. By creating a "system" of early identification, assessment and intervention, the individual criminogenic, social/emotional, behavioral, mental health and academic needs of at-risk pre-delinquent and delinquent children and youth can be addressed within the context of their family, school, and community such that no child or youth is entered into the juvenile justice system without having exhausted appropriate community resources.

While much progress is being made in diverting youth from the juvenile justice system, racial and ethnic disparities continue to plague community-based programming, detention and secure placement facilities. To address this, the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA) started a Racial and Ethnic Disparity (RED) Reduction Program in 2011 with the Center for Children's Law and Policy (CCLP) to begin to work on identifying the causes of RED in Connecticut's largest cities. While the program has reduced RED in Connecticut's four largest cities, in Hamden and Norwalk, where the population is more diverse, rates of RED are now even higher than RED in the largest cities.

This "Achieving Positive Youth Outcomes for Safer and Healthier Communities" Project of assessing community-based support capacity and the impact of Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the towns within Connecticut is in line with the new strategic goals established by the JJPOC and will capture the substantive changes in the past 15 years, a better coordinated state with multiple collaborations, and the readiness of continued reform to Connecticut's juvenile justice system. The work of CCA and CYSA, along with the research to be completed by the University of New Haven, will provide substantial information to support the work of the JJPOC.

## Welcome



**Kelly Orts**

### **Project Manager, Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee**

The Tow Youth Justice Institute is pleased to welcome Kelly Orts to the team as the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee Project Manager. Kelly is dedicated to improving the mental health and well-being of community members through early intervention, prevention, and trauma-informed care. While at the Wheeler Clinic in Hartford, Kelly oversaw the domestic violence offender program, implementing best-practice intervention models. At the Community Health Center, Kelly was a community educator and adult advocate in the New Horizons Domestic Violence Services. Kelly has worked with men, women, children and families who come into contact with the justice system.

Kelly is now turning her talents to the policy side. She is not new to the Tow Youth Justice Institute and the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. While completing her Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice and Forensic Psychology in the Henry C. Lee College, Kelly interned with TYJI from January 2015 – November 2016. She worked with Erika Nowakowski, Director of Youth Justice Initiatives constructing Connecticut State juvenile justice and legislative reports, formulating research proposals for Institutional Review Board approval, and conducting research on national juvenile justice models and reform efforts. Welcome back Kelly!

Please visit [newhaven.edu/towyouth](http://newhaven.edu/towyouth) for more information about the Tow Youth Justice Institute.  
Please scan the image to read our Issue Briefs and other Quarterly Newsletters.



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