



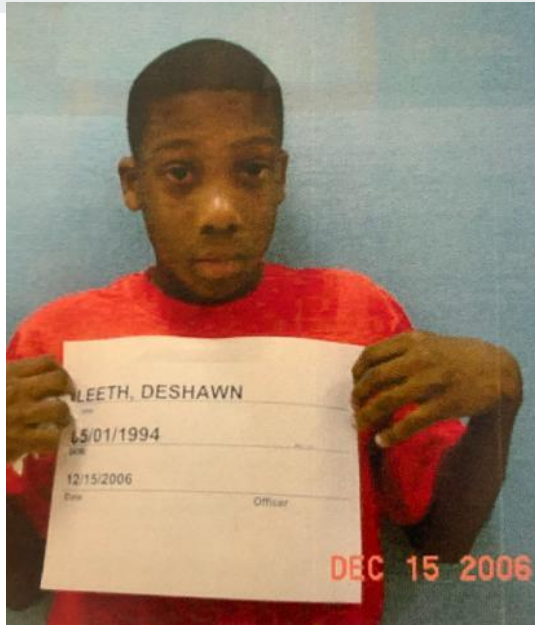
P.S.A Breaking News Youth Matters Deshawn Leeth Research Project

Michigan



The Juvenile Justice System

Purpose: To provide individualized assessments to rehabilitate and prevent further delinquent behavior through the development of educational, vocational, social, emotional and basic life skills which enable youth to grow and mature.



Youth Prisoner Deshawn Leeth 11 years old



18 years in the system

- 2006 - 2011 Juvenile record First Charge Theft Retail Store. (Kmart BIke
- 2012–2021: Term in the Michigan Department of Corrections
- Jan5,2021: Release date
- Jan,5,2023: Signed Parole Papers





The juvenile justice system is supposed to prevent further delinquency but I spent 18 years in the system due to fines and fees imposed on my parents who lived under the poverty line. We live in an environment where black and brown youth receive the harshest punishment.

Research Question



How do juvenile court fines and fees impact the financial well-being and emotional experiences of families involved in the justice system?



What do the experts say?

National Center for Youth Law (2021): Macomb County assessed the highest amount of fees and fines compared to the 73 other counties that reported. But also with this report they was successful getting fines and fees abolish.

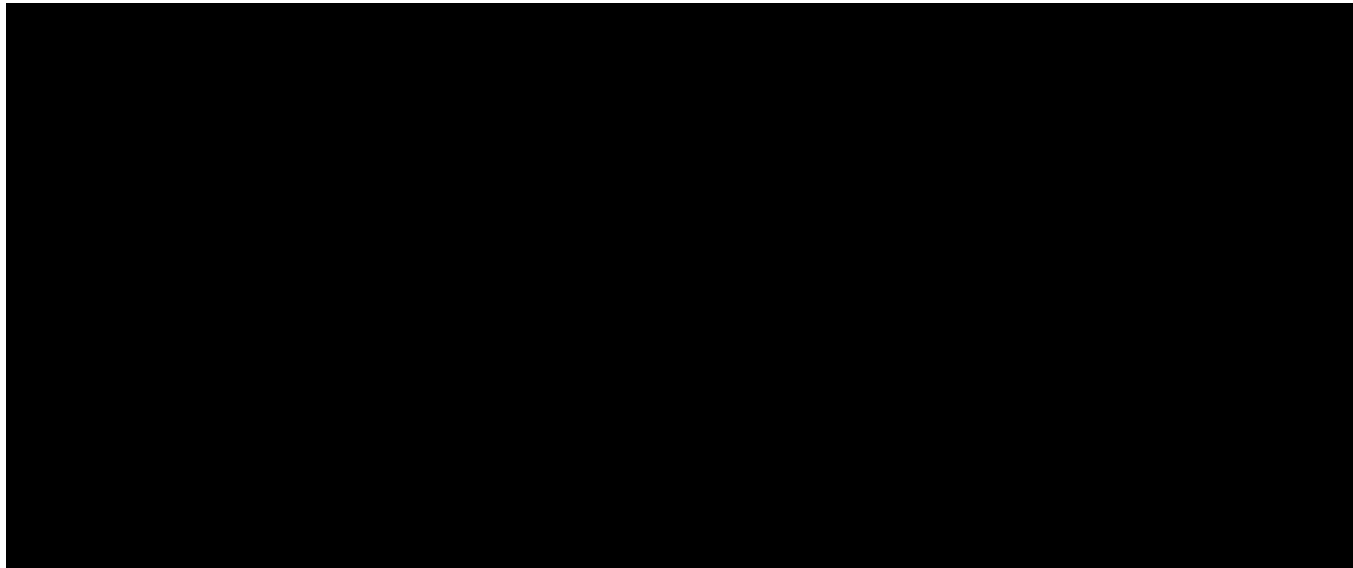
Fines and Fees Justice Center (2020): Juvenile court fines and fees have a lasting harmful impact on Michigan families, particularly low income and Black families.

Juvenile Law Center (2023): Unpaid juvenile court fines and fees can be taken out of wages, unemployment checks, and can lead to arrest.

The Hood - “From the Struggle” (2023): “How we gone pay fines and fees when we broke already? One fine for stealing a bike cost me 18 years in the system.” - Deshawn Leeth (me)



THE PROBLEM



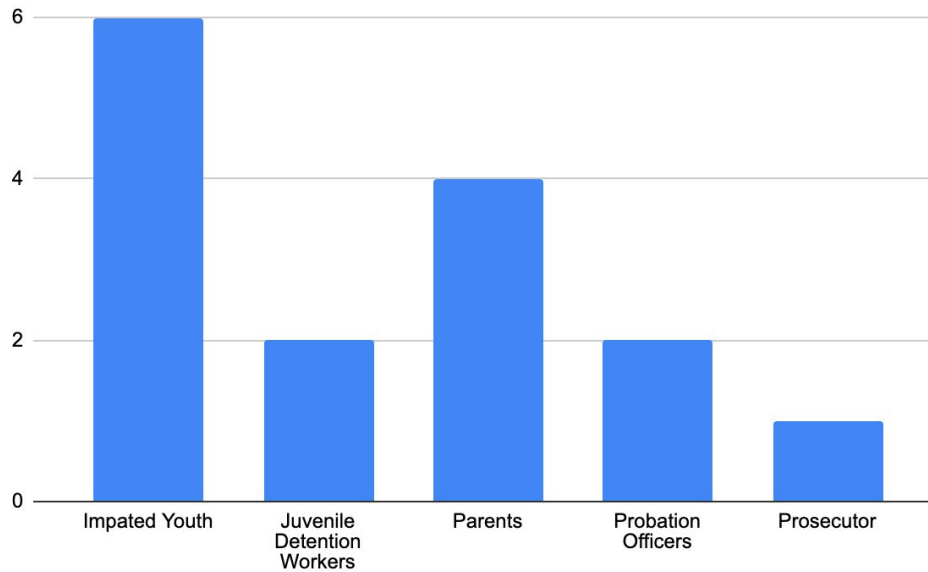


Primary Research: Interview Guide

1. How old were you when you caught your first juvenile offense?
2. Did you pay your fine and fees on time?
3. At any time did you feel like you were getting treated unfairly?
4. Do you think kids should be responsible of paying fines and fees?
5. Do you think the juvenile system has a harsh punishment for kids?
6. Should the juvenile system abolish fines and fees?



Interview demographics





Primary Research: Common themes

- Fees are almost impossible for affected families to pay.
- Fee assessment create additional debt and stress for low-income families.
- Fee assessment lengthens incarceration and threatens true rehabilitation.



Secondary Research Results

With all the data and stories i collect data some of the key finding i discover was

1. Juvenile court fines and fees have lasting harmful impact on Michigan families, particularly low-income and Black ,Brown families.
2. Juvenile court fines and fees are inconsistently and unfairly assessed against and collected from Michigan families.
3. We need to improve the conditions to reduce juvenile recidivism are where going to have a violent crisis that we could have preventing .



Action Plan

1. Abolish juvenile fees in Michigan
2. Eliminate previous debts for youth and families dealing with fines and fees.
3. Invest in grassroots organizations that involve people who have have been impacted by the system
4. Refine the grant application process
5. Create more opportunities of for brown and black youth and communities to learn policy and help build a better future.
6. Invest into more fellowships like DFJ
7. Persuade courts to analyze and understand data about the impacts of fines and fees, including identifying the actual revenue collected, and identifying alternate sources of revenue.

My solution: UnderDawgNation



UnderDawgNation's Mission is to help youth avoid the criminal legal system by preventing teen violence and increasing teen's disengagement in school and providing them with safe space to be kids and everyday basic needs.



List of sources (references/works cited page)

<https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2023/06/see-which-washtenaw-county-communities-are-growing-shrinking.html>

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/annarborcitymichigan.vpsilanticitymichigan/AGE295222>

<https://www.miyouthjustice.org/debtfree-justice>

<https://www.improovy.com/most-expensive-cities-in-michigan/#:~:text=Ann%20Arbor%20is%20the%20most.empty%20your%20purse%20or%20wallet>

<https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2023/09/racial-disparities-plague-washtenaw-county-criminal-legal-system-new-report-has-65-solutions.html>

<https://youthlaw.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-02/2020.08.13-MI-Fines-Fees-1.pdf>

- [Minors Facing Major Debt](#) (Macomb)
- [Do it Yourself Guide](#)
- [The steep cost of fines and fees](#) (this is an article on adult and juvenile fees but still interesting)
- [The High Cost of Justice - fines and fees in Michigan](#) (this one is great)
- [Locking children up for noncriminal offenses](#) (not so fines and fees but focused in on Michigan)
- [Why Youth Incarceration Fails](#) (broad overview of juvenile justice)
- [State assessment chart](#) (page 7 is juvenile costs from 2021)
- [Fines and fees op-ed by rep hope](#) (this was last legislative term, Rep. Hope is now the Chair of the criminal justice committee).