



# Restorative Justice and Community Conferencing

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[www.CommunityConferencing.org](http://www.CommunityConferencing.org)



*"We find that all of us, as a society, are to blame, but only the defendant is guilty."*

We *CAN* do better.

Justice as healing, learning & accountability

# Addressing Common Needs Expressed by Stakeholders

- Provide meaningful response to juvenile crime
- Address DMC issues
- Give victims a voice
- Better outcomes – socially and fiscally
- Address root causes

# Traditional Justice

(Retributive)

The process is characterized by adversarial relationships managed by professionals (lawyers, judges, etc.)

Victims are peripheral to the process

Focus on punishing the offender

Victims and community are represented by the state

# Restorative Justice

The process is characterized by dialogue and negotiation among participants

Victims are central to the process

Focus is on **repairing the harm** (to *relationships, physical, monetary, etc.*), **healing** and **learning**

Victims and community are part of deciding outcomes for themselves

# Restorative Practices

offer simple yet powerful *structures*  
for people to manage relationships and conflict in  
healthy ways

by allowing people to be human (emotional)



# Foundational Principles of RJ

- There are no disposable people
- Respect
- Fairness
- Inclusion
  - Expert Culture: Leaves large stores of *untapped wisdom*
- Allow people to make decisions for *themselves*
- Honor our biology as human beings
  - Allow for emotion
  - Value connection
  - Space to tell our story

RJ gives us leverage in addressing  
racial bias and disparities

We need to use it *more*.



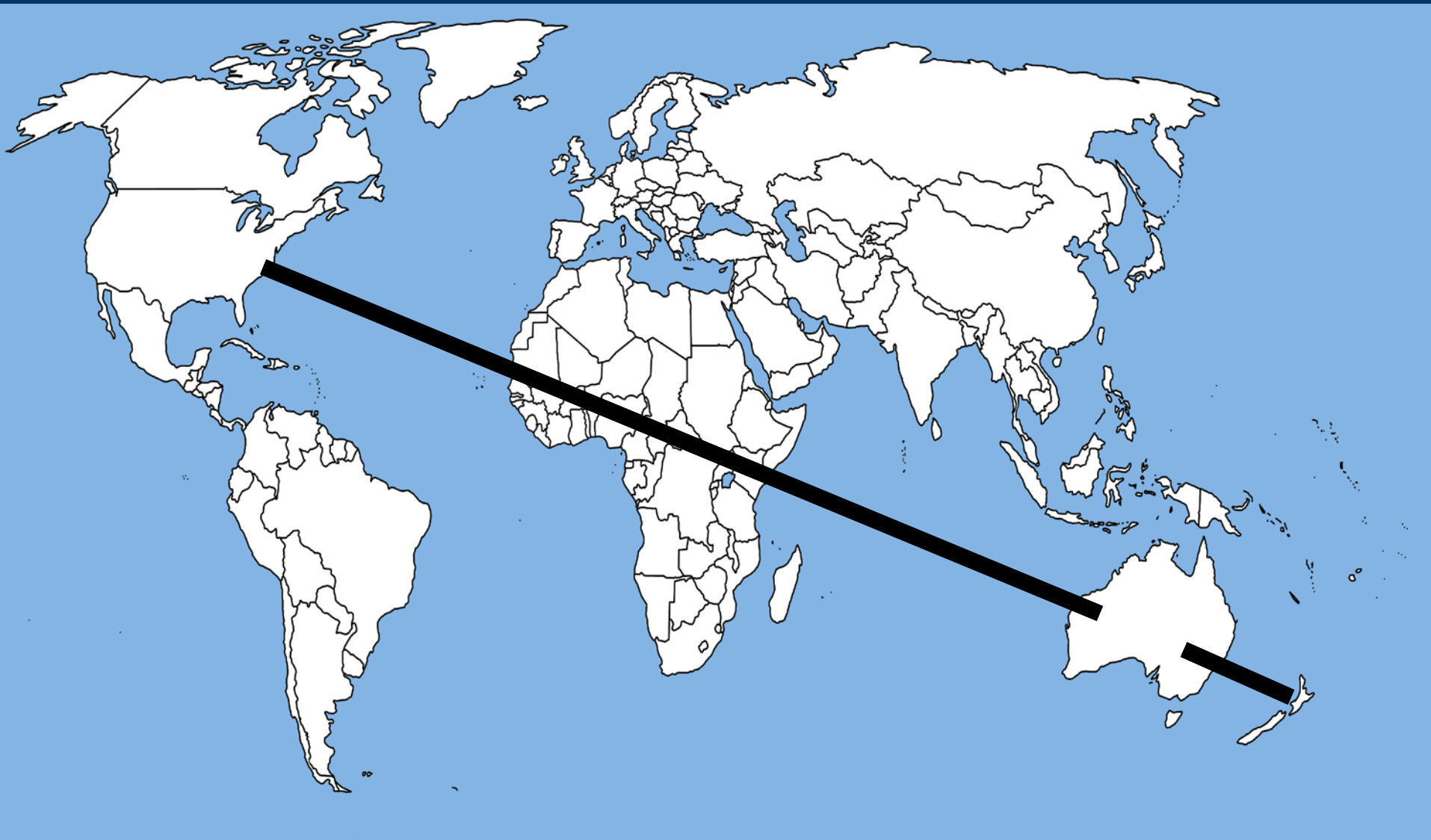
Dept. of Education, Office of Civil Rights  
Study of all 97,000 public schools  
(2014)

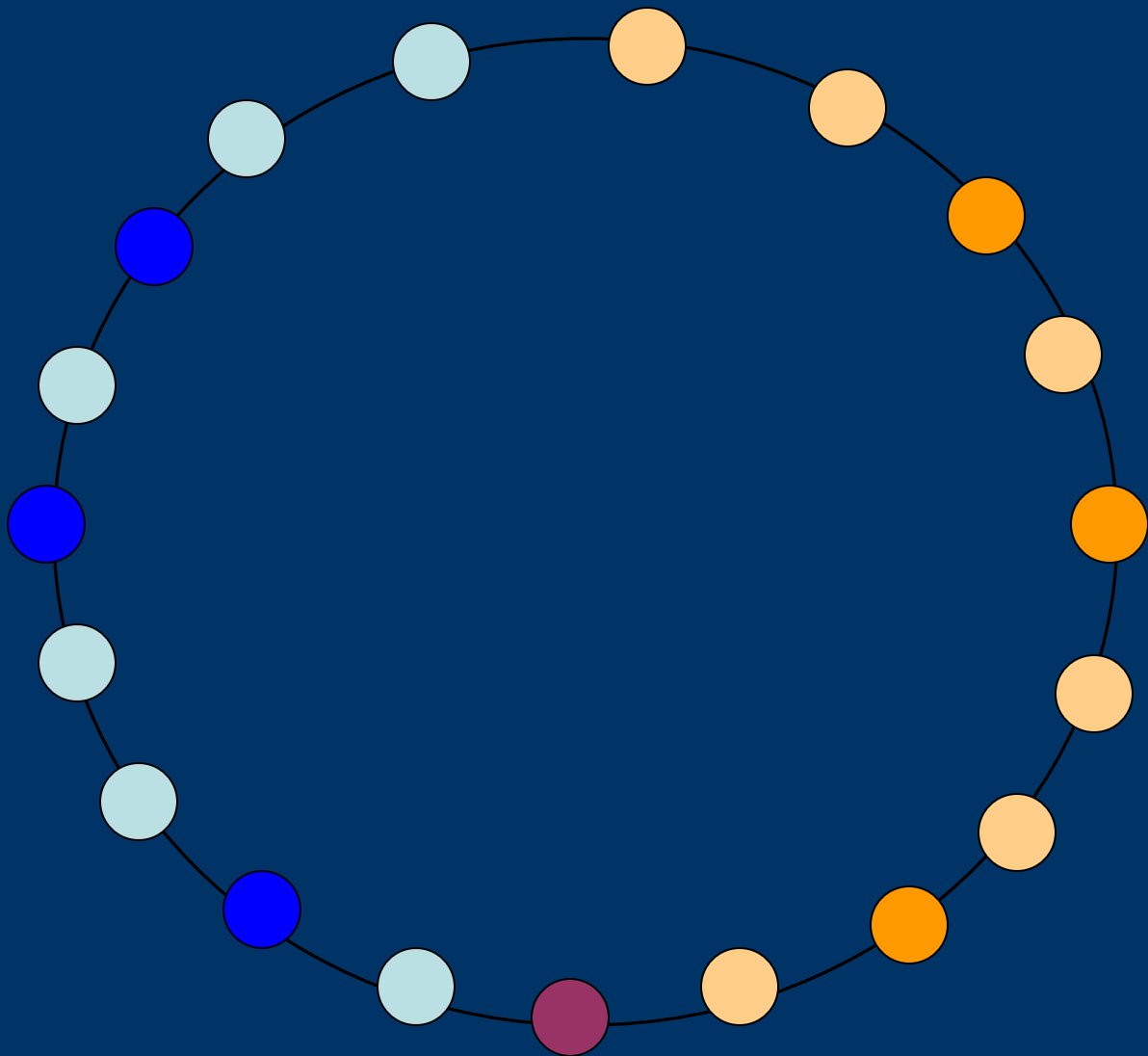
- “...pattern of inequality on a number of fronts, with race as the dividing factor.”
- African American students suspended/expelled at 3x the rate of white students
- African American children make up 18% of preschool enrollment, but nearly 50% of preschool suspensions

# The push back

- Too soft on crime. It let's kids off the hook.
- “Too touchy feely”
- What if they re-offend?
- Principals don't want to bring together any more than 2 people at a time. It get's too crazy.

# Community Conferencing





What happened?

How have people  
been affected?

What can be done to

repair the harm

prevent it from happening again



video

# Referral Sources

# Where we use it

Anywhere there are people who are in conflict...  
for whatever reason

- Criminal Justice  
Court diversion, case planning following detention
- Schools  
Alternative to school suspension and arrest (bullying, fights, hate crimes)
- Neighborhoods  
Ongoing, intractable conflicts
- Workplaces  
Conflict, risk management, harassment, etc.
- Human Services  
Collaborative and inclusive case / tx planning
- Planning
- Re-integration (following military service, incarceration, etc.)  
Collectively understand impact; reconnect with network of support

# Kinds of Cases

# 19,000

Baltimore residents safely resolved  
their own crimes/conflicts  
using Community Conferencing

95%

result in effective Agreements

60%

less re-offending

# 1/10<sup>th</sup>

the cost of court



This is not just for first time offenders!

# Felony Diversion

After 1 year

Half as likely to re-offend

# Felony Diversion

After 2 years

One-third as likely to re-offend

96%

Youth diverted in Baltimore  
are African-American

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video

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