

Statement in Support of Social Justice and Discourse to Address Criminal Justice Reform

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The Associated Students of San Francisco State University write this statement in support of the young people demanding social justice and criminal justice reform, as well as the civic engagement required to accomplish more equitable policies and practices.

Black and brown citizens and youth have been systematically oppressed and targeted by the law enforcement and criminal justice systems, resulting in the school to prison pipeline that robs youth of a lifetime of potential.

These systems are just another aspect of the historic and systemic racism that impoverish communities and cause poor neighborhoods, underfunded schools, food deserts, poor health, mismanaged public housing, and lack of investment and resources that have resulted in little options for youth in areas of concentrated poverty and high crime.

Programs, rehabilitation, prison diversion, and education have been shown to put youth on paths to education, employment, empowerment, and success that break cycles of poverty.

Project Rebound, now in its 55th year, and founded at San Francisco State University by Professor John Irwin, assists incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals in achieving their educational goals. On 20 October, 2022, in partnership with the Department of Criminal Justice and the Institute for Civic and Community Engagement, a nonpartisan forum was hosted for candidates in the San Francisco District Attorney (D.A.) race. District Attorneys decide the type and severity of charges filed against individuals accused of committing crimes.

The forum was designed to be a discussion on well-researched and nuanced questions including: the District Attorney's decision to remove a long respected judge from newly filed juvenile cases; the candidate's stances in considering the immigration consequences during the plea-bargaining process; qualified immunity for police officers; whether conviction rates are the standard measure of success for District Attorneys; their approach to cleaning up street crime; prison reentry; and avoiding transfers from youth into the adult criminal justice system with age-appropriate rehabilitative services. Project Rebound did not endorse any candidate nor allow comments, signage, or applause from the audience.

Ten minutes into the forum, protestors made their way into Jack Adams Hall, demanding justice for Sean Moore and Kieta O'Neil, two individuals that were unarmed when they were shot and killed by San Francisco Police officers. Both officers involved were criminally charged for their shootings but movement towards trials have stalled with the recall of the previous D.A., the appointment of the sitting D.A., and the coming election. The sitting D.A. left the building. The activists were given the microphone and delivered an eloquent speech that denounced public comment in public meetings as limited and inadequate, and called for an independent community task force that would oversee accountability, transparency, and follow-up in criminal and juvenile justice, before leaving peacefully.

We understand and acknowledge the pain of the families, friends, and supporters of Sean Moore and Kieta O'Neil and condemn the delay of justice regarding the police officers involved in these killings. We also understand that this community has been ignored and have not been granted an audience to make their case to the D.A., a public official that should meet their constituents regularly.

We commend the activists for voicing the demand for social justice and speaking truth to power. We regret that the forum was interrupted because the room unanimously shared the protestors' grievances, and the thoughtfully prepared questions may have propelled the conversation on criminal justice towards formal policies that we deem necessary to equity, justice, and realizing the true potential of the youth and members of our marginalized communities.

We agree with the outrage, while recognizing the role of dialogue and changing the system from within - by public servants who respond to the will of the people and place justice over political expediency. We must use our hard fought right to vote and participate in the policymaking process in order to actualize the just society everyone deserves.

This organization and the students of SFSU have long been committed to social justice. Let us heed the call and the example of both the activists for their fearless advocacy and devotion to justice and Project Rebound for their work in rehabilitation, representation, and promotion of discourse and civic engagement, in the march for progress.

In Solidarity,

Associated Students of San Francisco State University
Board of Directors