

## THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN POLICE CAN ARREST 10 YEAR OLDS: PRESS RELEASE

***Strategies for Youth endorses the statement issued today by three advocacy organizations about the harm of unjust prosecutions of Black youth, and joins them in their call for immediate reforms, including legislation and law enforcement policies prohibiting the arrest of children. In view of the selective enforcement of law, the urgency of these reforms is all the more necessary to protect Black children from becoming unnecessarily system-involved.***

CAMBRIDGE, MA—DECEMBER 20, 2023—Strategies for Youth, a national nonprofit training and policy organization dedicated to improving interactions between police and young people and reducing racial disparities, strongly endorses the [statement](#) issued today by two Mississippi-based advocacy organizations-- the Lighthouse/Black Girls Project, and the Southern Poverty Law Center—and the National Juvenile Justice Network in condemning the unjust criminalization of a 10-year old Black child by a Mississippi Youth Court Judge last week.

While the officer who arrested the child was fired, and the Lieutenant who supervised the arrest was disciplined by the Chief Chandler of the Senatobia Police Department, the Tate County prosecutor took the case to court. There, the Judge sentenced the child to three-months on probation for urinating behind a car door in a parking lot because there were no public restrooms available.

The [statement cites a recent report from the Southern Poverty Law Center](#), entitled “Only Young Once” that documents the stark racial disparities in Mississippi in arrest, prosecution and incarceration between Black and White children. The report states that Mississippi’s youth legal system treats “young Black people as criminals who need punishment instead of children who need support and care” and that incarceration “not only does incredible harm to them at the most vulnerable time of their life, it also perpetuates more harm later in life.”

Strategies for Youth programs, interventions, policies, and advocacy efforts aim to stop such unnecessary, harsh, and unjust prosecutions. The results are appalling and immoral: long-term harm to children, their families, and communities. Too often these experiences push children and youth deeper into the juvenile legal system, either due to adults’ labeling youth as “trouble” or children believing the label of delinquent the community has conferred on them. Extricating themselves from this vise is all but impossible.

SFY joins those calling for immediate reforms aimed at raising the age in Mississippi and in all other 22 states in which there is no lower age of arrest. Failing to do so means a child can be arrested, prosecuted, detained and incarcerated *primarily for nonviolent, technical, and minor offenses.*

“This is exactly why we need policies and training for law enforcement officers. This arrest is incredibly traumatic and harmful on multiple levels,” said SFY Executive Director Lisa Thureau. “There is no possible public safety justification for arresting and prosecuting a child for such an innocuous act, and it can only result in harm and trauma to him, his family, and his community. This is predatory policing and we are grateful that the police department understood that. We are horrified that the Tate County Prosecutor and Judge did not”

SFY encourages all organizations to post these notices, express their views, and commit to ensuring the end of arrests of children, especially children of color, for behavior that officers would otherwise ignore.



A 10 year old urinated behind his mother's car after his sister said that the office where his mother attended a meeting did not have a bathroom. After one officer stopped to address this “crime,” additional officers from Senatobia Police Department led by a lieutenant, came on scene. The lieutenant later reportedly told the 10-year-old he was arrested, placed him in the back of a squad car, and brought him to the Senatobia PD for booking.