



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 7, 2023

### Center the Youth

On behalf of the NAACP Santa Rosa - Sonoma branch, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to the Montgomery High School and Santa Rosa City Schools Community; students especially.

I want to invite the community to pause and breathe. Our community is hurting.

There are a lot of details that may never be known due to the nature of what occurred but what we can control is what follows. We need to center the student voices as they continue to express what they need.

As I continue to process the situation alongside the community. I must share that this situation hits home. Throughout my 7th - 12th grade education I experienced officers on my Jr. High campus that allowed regular ICE raids, and some students returned later on in my high school journey with many others unknown. My high school had 11 school resource officers in addition to 5 security guards. We wore our ID cards on lanyards, had metal detector entry, and a police substation across the street. With all this at play, I learned three things:

1. Their presence on campus did not decrease the (*threat of*) violence.
2. As a campus ASB Leader/athlete/AP course student, I still had negative engagement.
3. The campus climate didn't shift until the administration did. The more they responded to our needs and took accountability, the culture shifted.

Locally, I'm seeing loud, pro law enforcement voices push for more police in schools and also, what looks like a coordinated effort by law enforcement agencies to seize this moment to amplify their presence on campuses. Time and again, when there are difficult moments, fear can push us towards carceral systems that disproportionately harm students of color and do not make us safer. The data show us this. Police are not clinical social workers or mental health professionals. They are not restorative justice facilitators, nor do they provide trauma informed interventions to violence. Police do not provide anti racism and anti bias training. Police are not special education advocates, bilingual facilitators, nor do they have cultural competence training. These are the things needed on our campuses. Not more policing.

Students are the most important stakeholders in guiding what happens next. They know what is needed on their campuses. They must be an integral part of creating an intentional school community where everyone feels safe and seen.

Join me in the call to form a student advisory council where our youth will have the space to bring forth their concerns, ideas, and be the stewards of redirection. The way in which this student council is selected will be key to what they produce.

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