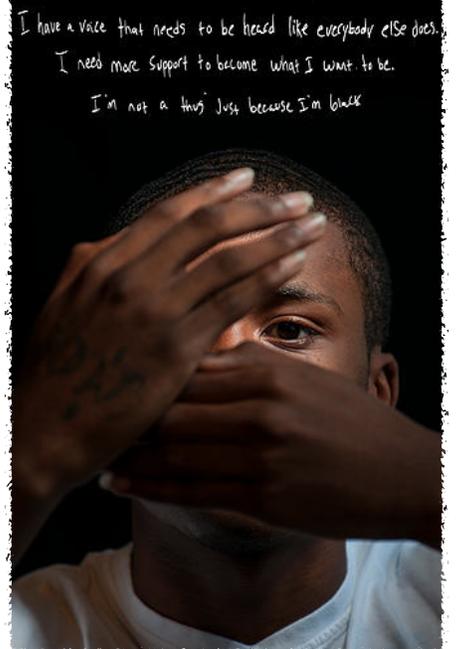


# Action Kit

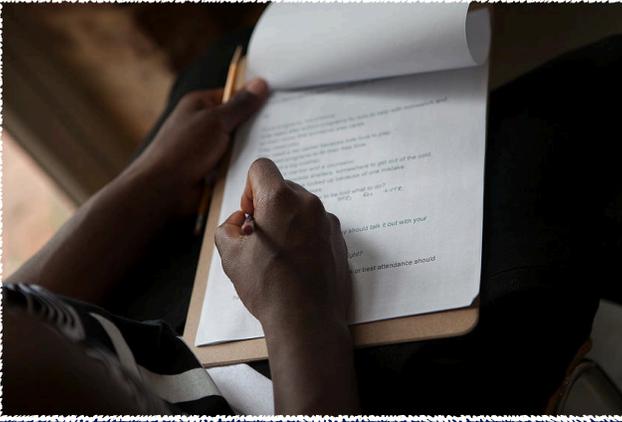


RISE (Re-Invest in Supportive Environments) for Youth is a statewide campaign coalition in support of investing in youth in their communities rather than youth in prison. Join the movement to transform Virginia's Juvenile Justice System.



# 5 Powerful Ways to Take Action

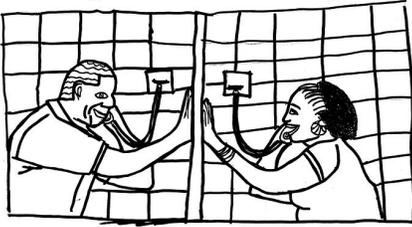
- 1. Sign Up** to join the RISE for Youth Coalition at [www.riseforyouth.org](http://www.riseforyouth.org).
- 2. Share Your Opinion** by writing a Letter to the Editor or Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed) in your local newspaper about the need for juvenile justice reform.
- 3. Speak Out** by contacting your State Delegate or Senator and encourage them to support investing money in youth in their communities rather than youth in prison.
- 4. Share Your Story** with us. If you or a family member has been involved in the juvenile justice system and you have ideas about how to change the system, we want to know about it. Your experience and your voice matters!
- 5. Spread the Word** in your community by setting up a community forum or inviting Jeree Thomas, Kate Duvall, or Da'Quon Beaver to speak in your community.



## Tips on Writing an Op-Ed

1. **Keep it short and sweet.** 750 words or less.
2. **Make a single point really well.** Don't try to solve the problems in one op-ed. Highlight and make a single point.
3. **Stay Active!** Don't use a passive voice, but rather an active voice when you are writing.
4. **Use simple everyday language.** Technical terms and jargon can confuse the reader. Keep your language simple.
5. **Start with a story that keeps the reader interested.** Once you've shown the problem through the story, you can connect it to the issue and your solution.
6. **Use the facts and data to support your story.** Good op-eds include facts and data that support the point you are trying to make.

We Fear Being Forgotten,  
Being Gone For Too Long



## Did You Know...

- The average annual cost of confinement in a state juvenile prison in Virginia is **\$137,000** per youth?
- Youth as young as **11 years old** can be confined to a state juvenile prison.
- Juvenile prisons do not reduce recidivism. Youth with long stays in juvenile prisons are more likely to be rearrested within a year of release.
- Virginia's length of stay for youth in juvenile prisons is over twice the national average: **18.2 months** in Virginia compared to **8.4 months** nationally.
- Newport News and Norfolk had the highest number of youth committed to juvenile prisons in 2014.
- The highest percentage of youth committed to juvenile prisons were committed for larceny. Virginia has the lowest threshold for felony larceny in the country: **\$200**.
- **76.8%** of youth in juvenile prisons have mental health treatment needs.

# Take Action Now



All artwork featured in this action kit was produced by youth and artist Mark Strandquist of the Performing Statistics Project in Art 180's Atlas Studio.

This action kit was produced by the Legal Aid Justice Center. Jeree Thomas is the attorney responsible for this material. 123 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219 and [jeree@justice4all.org](mailto:jeree@justice4all.org).