



Prevention Mindset Institute: *Embracing Prevention Across Systems*

Rising to the Challenge of our Declaration of Independence and Centering Families over Systems

The PMI 3-2-1 newsletter shares three ideas, two quotes, and one question to ponder. This issue focuses on the disproportionate harm caused to families of color by the child protection system and challenges all of us to recognize and reduce trauma and build new versions of community conditions and institutions. We thank Corey Best, Founder and Community Curator of Mining for Gold, for editing this summer 2023 issue.

FRIENDS and our PMI partners rotate editing each edition. The format, 3-2-1, is based on James Clear's newsletter that shares ideas related to developing effective habits, drawing from his book, Atomic Habits.

Freedom and independence are celebrated on the 4th of July. While many recognize this tradition collectively, we have not held the truths of the Declaration to be self-evident. ALL bodies may have been created equally, however, the treatment of the most minoritized and marginalized remains eerily familiar to the days of yore. For countless Black families, the severity of exposure to child protective services (CPS) means a life filled with prolonged and exacerbated racialized trauma. This destruction has been researched, challenged, debated far too long. No one is "sleep." The greatest fear is that we, in "prevention," may be timid about building anew.

We have hope for those who openly acknowledge the need for our current institutions of oppression to be abolished – not to be replicated nor reformed. After all, the Declaration of Independence states that it is the right of citizens to abolish destructive governmental systems. And in the case of the family policing system, we have evidence of the abundance of harm. The costs associated with discriminatory child welfare policies have reached the magnitude of irreparable damage. Namely CAPTA. You know, where we warehouse ALL things CPS and prevention. Yes, this one federal law that did so much to get us to this place. It is CAPTA that has mandated that states create massive surveillance webs that include mandatory reporting laws and central registries; essentially "blacklists" for parents to support their climb out of poverty in which only racism has created and caused. Mandatory reporting laws have deputized therapists, doctors, teachers, and social workers to surveil and control families.

Despair will not get the last word. Therefore, the encouragement is to reflect on how serviceable CAPTA is, for the conditions we believe families require to actualize a sense of health, agency, and mastery over their own lives; to be inspired by activists and abolitionists who teach us that abolition is indeed practical and is principled in "what should be present." At this point, I can imagine lots of resistance. Before ending, I suggest that we become firm in what our brand of rigidity may be and why we hold these truths, opposed to the truths of equality as written in one of the most famous founding documents. As you do, please ponder the following:

Abolition as the mainstay:



Three Ideas:

Idea #1

Organize and build coalitions with community members to realign CBCAP funding.

Idea #2

Build new versions of community conditions and institutions. While dismantling harmful, racist proclivities. This prototyping must be done with and in neighborhoods, because the most marginalized should not be a token or passive player.

Idea #3

Avoid more and more programs and services. Without safe-to-fail design thinking, we will not “train or service” our way out of racism. Abolition requires a rooted and intentional approach that attacks racism, while experimenting with new and prioritized relationships with “the people.” Most of the value in life and in business arises out of good relationships.



Quotes:

“CAPTA is where CPS lives, this is where child welfare began as a national system, so we must begin here. This is where we have to go to attack it. We have to go after federal funding, federal policies and laws.” (Angela Olivia Burton, Audio Nuggets podcast in December 2022)

“There are no popular documentaries about how violent family separation, toxic stereotypes about Black maternal unfitness, and financial incentives for dismantling Black families are shared features of chattel slavery and the modern foster care system. Nor is there the same degree of media scrutiny of the disproportionate percentage of Black families controlled through the foster care system as there is of the disproportionate control of Black bodies through the criminal legal system. Nor is there political discourse on what it would mean to abolish the foster care system. There is no obligation to address the erasure of the welfare state that places so many Black mothers in permanent states of poverty.” (Erin Miles Cloud, Toward the Abolition of the Foster System in 2019)

Why do we treat children who we snatch from their families the same way we treat prisoners who are incarcerated? Both are separated from everyone and everything they know and love. Both have set visit times and days. Both have oversight during visits. Both eat what they are served. Both change locations regularly. Both use garbage bags and pillowcases to change locations. Both are strip searched. Both are paroled back to their families. Both are supervised during their parole.” (Joyce McMillan, Audio Nuggets podcast in February 2023)



One Question:

Does nurturing freedom dreams mean we must repeal CAPTA?