

JSA Juvenile Crime Abatement Team Statement

On April 14, the Justice & Safety Alliance (JSA) shared a presentation with journalists outlining a newly formed Juvenile Crime Abatement Team within the Memphis Police Department. The JSA firmly opposes the plan outlined in this presentation, which is now “on pause” after articles on the team’s existence were published. Our coalition of community-based advocates demands further commitment from MPD that it will stop the use of racial profiling and targeted task forces — for juveniles and adults.

Created by department leadership, this new specialized unit will end up racially profiling, surveilling, and criminalizing young people based on racist generalizations and failed stop-and-frisk policies. It is an intentional policing policy change focused on Downtown Memphis and represents an egregious, racist conception of public safety that would violate the civil rights of young people and undermine trust between the community and law enforcement.

The timing of this announcement is particularly alarming, coming just months after a SCORPION task force killed Tyre Nichols and just days after the City Council finished passing a slate of community-supported police reforms. Despite clear and consistent community calls to end pretextual stops, eliminate the use of plain clothes officers, and disband specialized units, this Juvenile Crime Abatement Team:

- Creates a new specialized unit to target children,
- Allows for pretextual *pedestrian* stops that criminalize normal teen behavior, and
- Employs plain clothes officers to carry out these stops.

If they choose to implement this plan despite all of the community pushback, MPD will further erode trust between law enforcement and the people they are supposed to protect and serve.

We cannot allow policies and practices like these to persist in our city. Young people in Memphis deserve better. They deserve a city that invests in their education and safety, not one that puts them on a path to prison and family separation. We must work together to build a city where young people, regardless of their race or income, can thrive and reach their full potential. We remain committed to working towards justice and safety for all in Memphis.