



A Path Forward from the Pain of Uvalde

By Andrew Hairston
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As our collective pain continues from the heartbreaking tragedy in Uvalde, we hear many similar notes from policymakers about what can or should be done or how it could have been prevented. The common refrain of many is that school safety must be synonymous with school policing and school hardening (i.e., use of metal detectors, facial recognition technology, and unannounced 'school safety audits'). We've heard it from the Governor, both after Santa Fe and now. Tragedy often pivots to action at the Texas Legislature, where some members of the House and Senate quickly reach to school policing as the panacea to deeper social issues. The result is that, in 2022, school policing is an expected part of the school infrastructure for millions of kids across Texas and the United States.

More and more, communities and researchers understand that there is no causal relationship between the presence of school police officers and the true safety of a school campus. In June 2020, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report on the characteristics of school shootings. The GAO concluded that, from 1999-2019, school shootings tended to occur in wealthier, whiter schools across the country. Despite this fact, research consistently yields the assessment that school police disproportionately patrol Black & Brown schools. Regardless of the school's racial makeup, school police serve as a detriment to safety and provide no benefit to any campus. Instead, dispatching police to true life-threatening situations proves safer than a consistent police presence on school campuses.

News reports repeatedly convey the botched police response and the subsequent refusal of local law enforcement agencies to cooperate with the Texas Department of Public Safety. This narrative comports with the circumstances of other school shootings in the past few years, like the one in Parkland, FL in 2018. For 22 years, across the twenty-first century, the same call for hardened schools has followed these horrific tragedies. In Texas, internal school police departments receive millions of dollars within the school district's budget, like the \$17 million school policing budget in Dallas ISD. Yet, school shootings continue to occur. And, where the money is

most needed—funding an appropriate number of school counselors and psychologists, as well as allocating money for student-focused support services, and more—that continues to remain sorely neglected.

As we solemnly commemorated the second anniversary of George Floyd's murder recently, we see school districts across the country walking back their initial commitments to divest from their school policing budgets. We urge everyone to pause and listen to the parents and young people most frequently harmed by school policing. We need political courage. We deserve broad acknowledgments of the truth by policymakers: school policing does not secure school safety or prevent mass violence on school campuses. Texas Appleseed hopes to see robust investments in proven practices like restorative justice, multi-tiered systems of support, and compassionate mental health services in schools across Texas. Forward-thinking policymaking doesn't start by imagining the violence that's needed to overcome the school shooter at the door; it starts by envisioning a world in which students, families, and communities are equipped with the compassionate support they need so that a shooter never arrives.

Texas Appleseed has long worked on the issue of school safety, and we recommit to our work to secure racial and social justice for all Texas students. To access the original blog, which was posted on June 3rd, and view its associated links and resources, visit www.TexasAppleseed.org/blog.

New Training Materials for Attorneys

The Texas Coalition on Coerced Debt, of which Texas Appleseed is a member, has created a set of online training materials for attorneys that focus on legal strategies to address coerced debt in Texas. Coerced debt is debt incurred through coercion: when an abusive partner has taken out debt in another person's name without that person's knowledge or by using threats or force. The trainings include a series of videos, PowerPoints, and other resources on the following topics:

- General Information about Coerced Debt and Identity Theft in Texas
- Using the Fair Credit Reporting Act to Help Victims of Coerced Debt
- Challenging the Collection of Coerced Debts

Go to "Coerced Debt" under our **Fair Financial Services** Project page.

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In Memoriam



How Eviction Records Can Keep Youth Locked Out of Housing for Years

Our latest report, released in April, is focused on the long-lasting impact of evictions on young people and how the filing of an eviction, regardless of the outcome or reason, can lead to years of housing instability. The report discusses the “Scarlet E” of eviction records and how they impact young people; the lack of data around evictions; the requirements and limits of the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act; and how various jurisdictions are trying to lessen the negative impact of the filing of an eviction case. We also provide recommendations to ensure that the filing of an eviction suit does not become a lifetime barrier to housing. To read our report, *The Long-Lasting Impact of Eviction Records*, visit the “Publications” section of our **Homeless Youth** Project page.

Texas Appleseed Staff in Action

Director of Community Outreach Kristian Caballero joins with other community partners, including TOP and Workers Defense, for a press conference to promote Harris County’s new enhanced library cards, which help residents who lack access to another valid form of identification.



Director of Youth Justice Brett Merfish (second from right) provided insights into the experiences of unhoused youth at the Austin Area Urban League Young Professionals general body meeting.

Research Analyst John Laycock spoke about the barriers to homeownership for BIPOC communities in San Antonio at a joint event between LISC-San Antonio and the San Antonio Area Foundation. John presented a report he co-authored: *Building Wealth with Homeownership: Closing Racial and Ethnic Opportunity Gaps*.



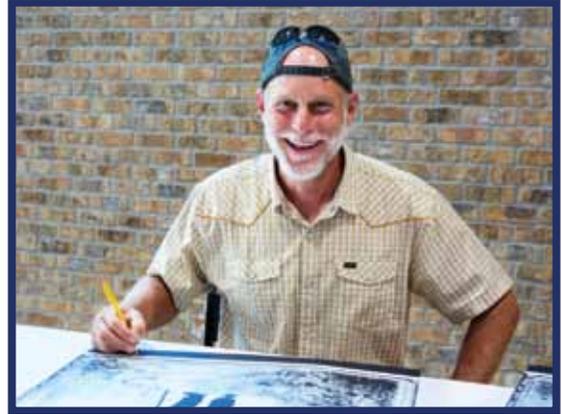
Our Fair Financial Services team — Project Director Ann Baddour (second from right) and Policy Analyst Briana Gordley (right) — participated in the Fair Lending Luncheon hosted by the East Texas Human Needs Network

(ETHNN). The event, featuring economist Dr. Ray Perryman, focused on the harmful economic impact of payday and auto title loans in Tyler. Also pictured are Mike Taliaferro and Christina Taliaferro, volunteers with ETHNN, as well as ETHNN CEO Jackie Clay (center).



I HEART JUSTICE

I Heart Justice celebrated both art and justice in an exhibition featuring art by 20 Texas artists. If you missed our April event, you can shop for posters in our online store, at www.IHeartJustice.org/shop.



www.IHeartJustice.org



Scholarship Helps Texans Take the LSAT Prep Course for Free

Texas Appleseed believes law school should be accessible to all qualified students. Through our Diversity Legal Scholars Project, we help low-income people of color expand their law school options by awarding a scholarship that covers the full cost of a Kaplan (LSAT) preparation course. We are accepting applications now, and the deadline is September 16, 2022. Please help spread the word! For the application and requirements, visit our [Diversity Legal Scholars Project page](#).

Have a Donor Advised Fund? Use it to Fund Racial Equity.

You can make a significant impact on our work with a grant from your Donor Advised Fund. Your gift helps Texans suffering from social and economic injustices. Please contact your fund today and make a grant recommendation to Texas Appleseed (Tax I.D. number 74-2804).



Answers on Insurance Claims

Homeowner's insurance plays a vital role in disaster recovery, not only helping families rebuild, but also providing coverage for temporary housing and replacing personal possessions. However, homeowner's insurance does not cover flood or windstorm damage for certain homeowners. Flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program and windstorm insurance through the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association are separate insurance policies with different coverage. Our newly updated fact sheet answers some commonly asked questions about homeowner's insurance after a disaster.

Access it on our **Disaster Recovery & Fair Housing** Project page in the "Resources" section.



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