Identifying & Understanding Structural Racism in Juvenile Justice

JDAI Inter-site Conference 2008
Indianapolis, IN

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The Realities of R/E Disparities (RED)

- High rates of RED of youth in many jurisdictions
- Juvenile justice systems have not been held accountable-- despite the federal legislative mandate to monitor RED
- Lack of awareness and/or interest among key decision makers about the problem
- Lack of knowledge among affected communities about how to address the problem.

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Structural Issues

- Raising Issue Perceived As Blame/Racist

- **Remedy**
- **Strategically Determine Point of Entry**
  - **Reduce Fears**
- **Strategically Using Data**

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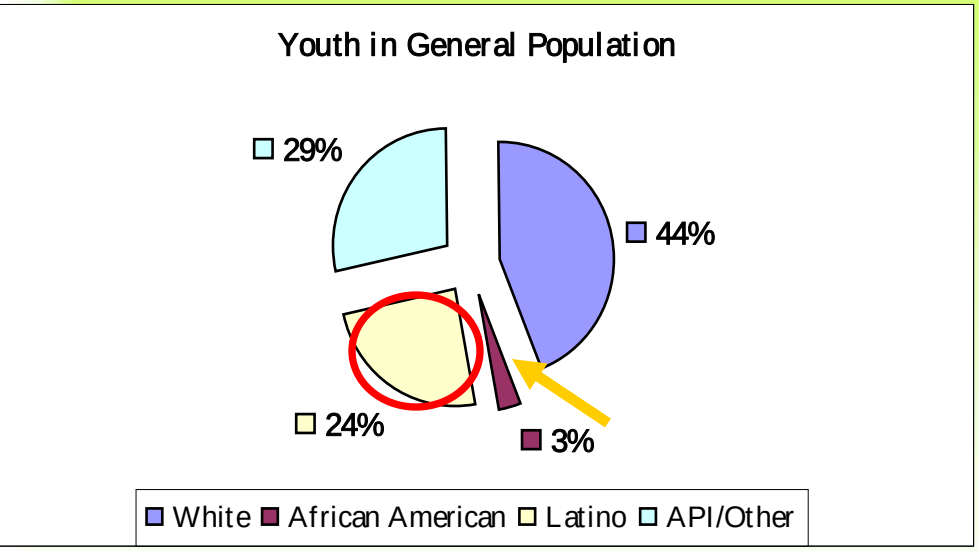
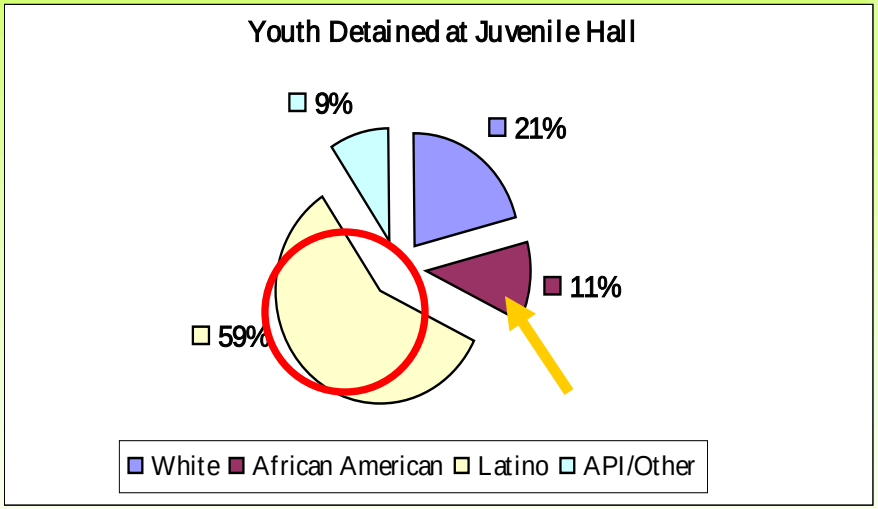
Numerical Disparity





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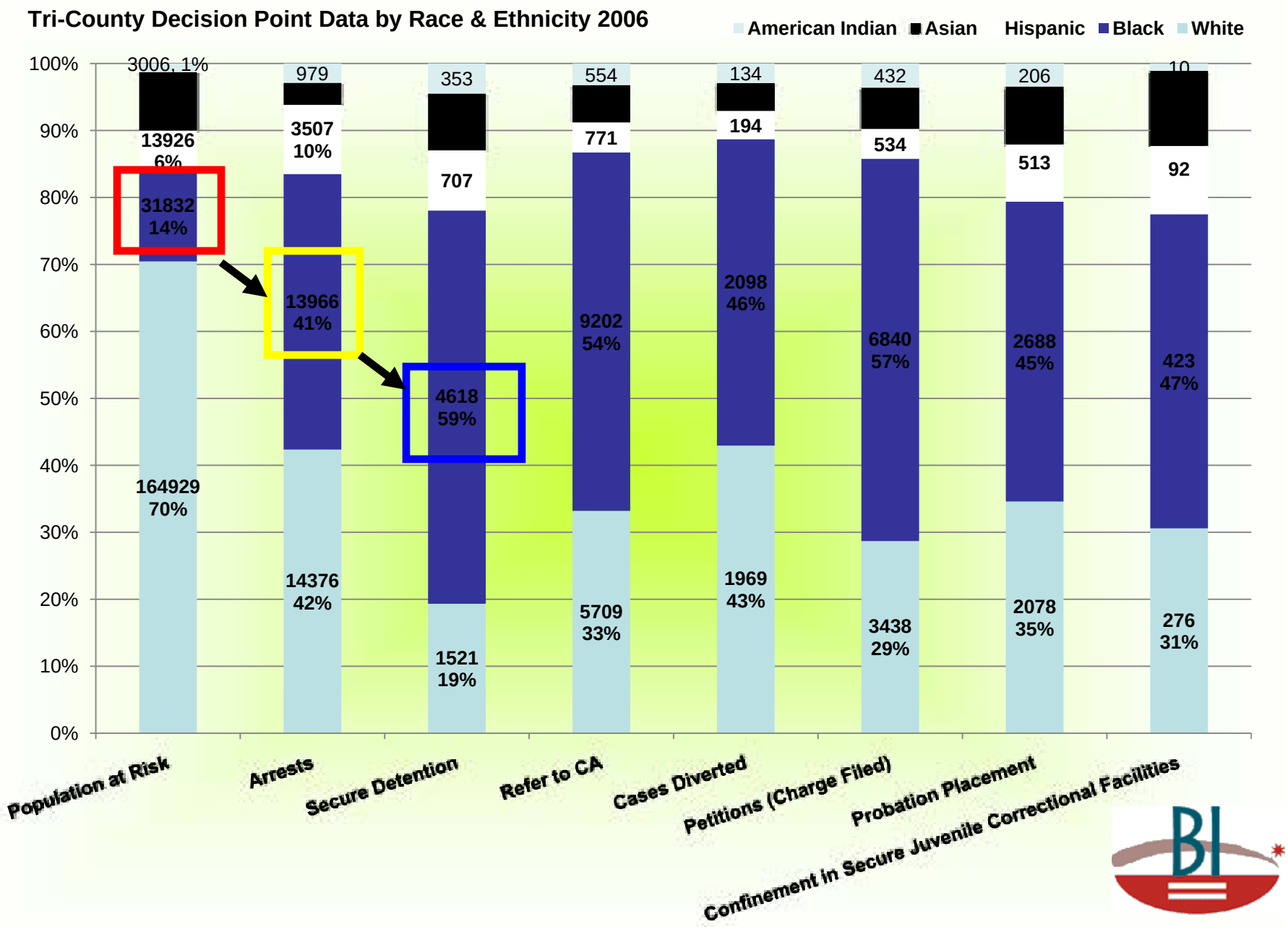

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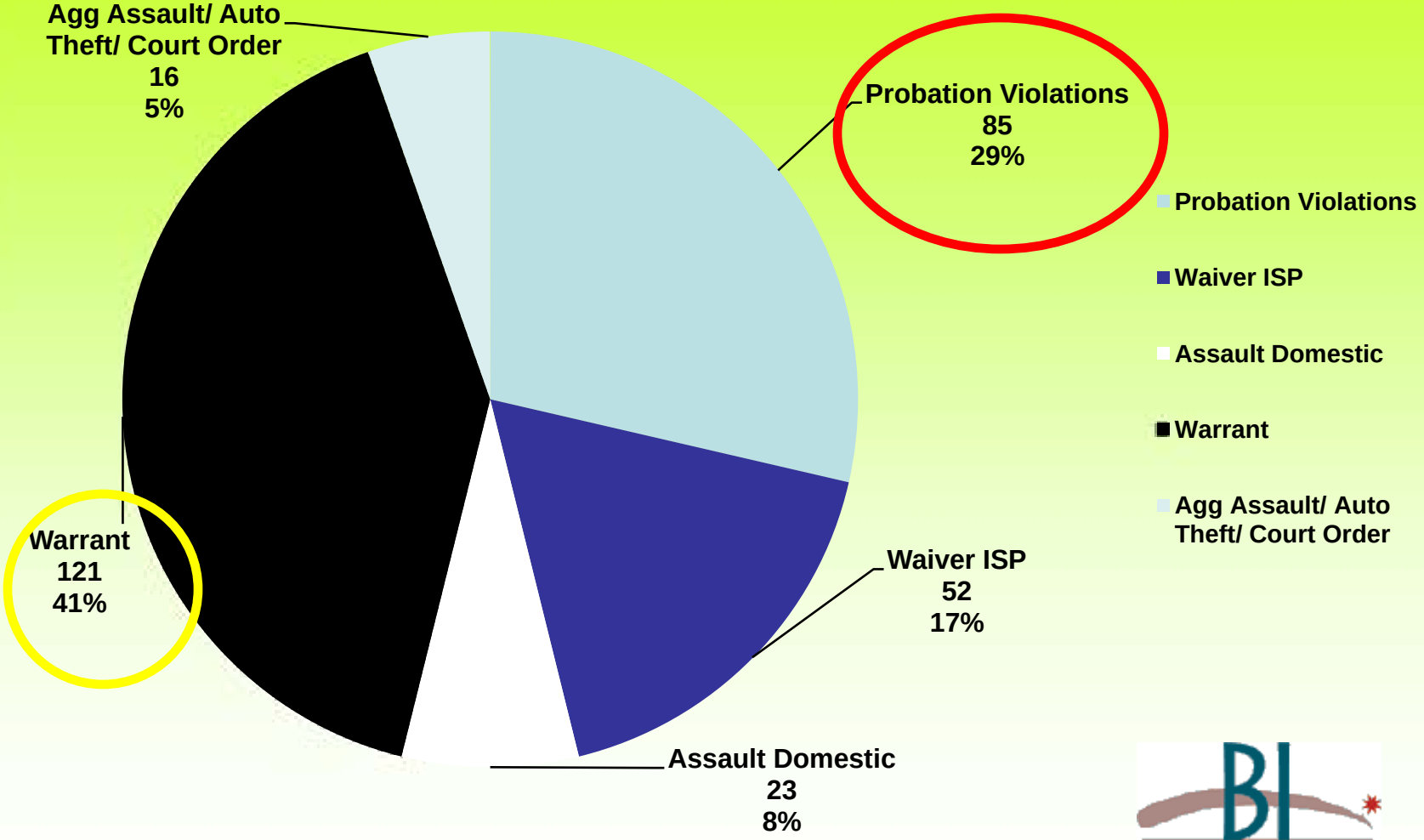
Top Five Detention Admissions by Offense
First Quarter 2008



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Structural Issues

- Identify and Eliminate Distracters
  - How Do We Define Race/Ethnicity
  - Endless Navel Gazing
  - Incomplete Collaborative
  - Socio Economic

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Structural Issues

- Debunking the “Trickle Down” Theory

- **Remedy**

- **Intentionality**
  - **REGGO**
  - **Measure Impact on RED of Policies & Practices**

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Hierarchy of Institutional Responses

- **Direct Causation Approach**
  - **Targeted and Measurable Outcomes**
- Attenuated Approach
  - Fund Programs & Hope
- Sounds Good Approach
  - One Grant Cycle--Cut & Run
  - Poor Use of Evidence-Based Practices

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Structural Issue

- Low Risk/High Need
  - Incarcerate for Services

  - **Remedy**
  - **Serious Scrutiny of "Race Neutrality"**
  - **Intentionality and Urgency**

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Disparities Conundrum

- 50 Youth in Local Detention Center
- 10 Awaiting Placement to State Facility
- 10 Detained for Adult Offenses
- 10 Out-of-County Holds
- 10 Probation Violations
- 5 Placement Failures
- **5** Discretionary "DMC" Kids

Policy Holds =45

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Establishing an Institutional Response

You’ve got data…

You know where disparities exist…

You know where policy/practice change could impact the numbers…

Now What?

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Establishing an Institutional Response

YOU MUST:

- Dig Deeper into apparently race neutral factors contributing to disparities
- Unpack institutional policies, practices and drivers to reduce RED
- Adopt Strategy
- Monitor effectiveness of each strategy
- Document Changes in reducing racial disparities

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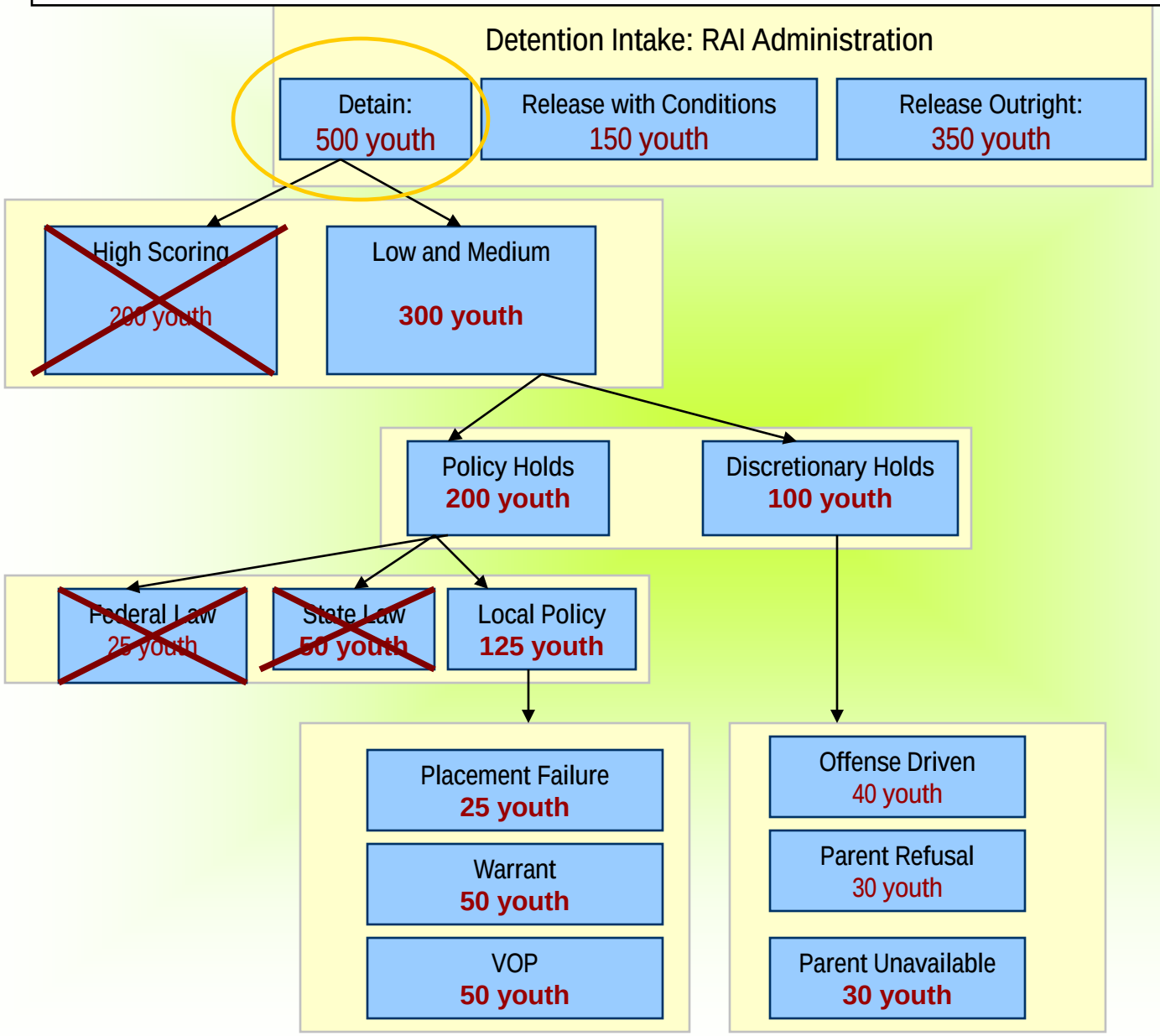
Digging Deeper: Structural System Based Decisions

Discretionary vs. Non-discretionary Holds



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