The background features a complex, abstract pattern of white lines on a black field. The lines are wavy and organic, creating a sense of movement and depth. Some areas are filled with a fine halftone dot pattern, while others are solid black or white. The overall effect is reminiscent of a topographical map or a stylized, high-contrast illustration.

# Equal resources & opportunities for underrepresented youth

By: Kalia Vasquez and Thania Mata

# Personal Motivation

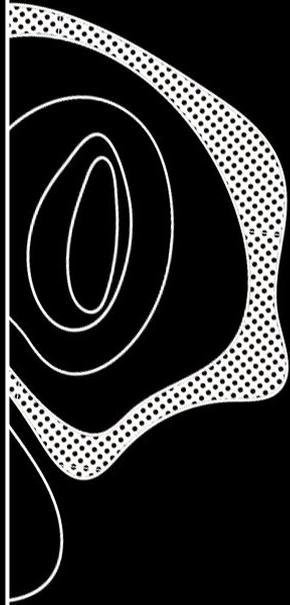
*The reason for my personal motivation towards this specific problem consists of the environment I grew up in. I grew up in a mostly minoritized community. The schools I went to were around 90% POC. The environment was composed of a system that purposely sent youth at a young age to juvenile hall. In fact, mostly all of these youth being incarcerated were culturally minoritized and that is when I started to recognize the issue. This opened my eyes to the problem in our justice system. Knowing that there was such a big issue in our system that specifically targeted my community gave me inspiration to advocate for change. Not only for my future but also for future generations, for those who wish for the breakage of this system, for those who don't have the power to advocate for themselves and for those who were a victim of this system.*

*-Thania Mata*

# Personal Motivation

*It was hard for all of us living in the community of Beach Flats, living in a community where gangs, poverty took away our innocence and converted our loving friends into gang members. At the age of thirteen, all I knew was what others told me or I had seen. Our local community was raided with cops day and night, constantly questioning my friends who looked “suspicious”. Living with my mother at the time was hard, she couldn’t leave her abusive husband, and so I spent my days wandering off into the night, hanging out with friends who introduced me to drugs and the gang lifestyle others are wanting to achieve so badly. violence between rival gangs caused my loving friends to commit a crime that left them incarcerated at the age of 15. Although my friends were incarcerated, I continued on their path despite knowing what that path led them to. It wasn’t until my mother called the cops on me and I was put in the back of a police car and left at the juvenile hall where I began thinking “why am I here?”. Although I didn’t stay long in juvenile hall, I had realized that I had now begun my criminal record with multiple offenses. My father encouraged me to change but everything that he said came out the other ear. It wasn’t until I was referred to a restorative program where I met someone who would change my life so greatly. He motivated and believed that I was someone worth fighting for, he did this by starting with my education, and by getting to know me by who I truly was behind what the eyes could see. He also helped me see by having knowledge with my experiences and beliefs, I can help change and shape injustices we see today - Kalia Vasquez Reyes*

# Problem Statement



There is lack of youth engagement within the decision making process that impact incarcerated minors. We need youth voices to uplift other youth struggling with internal and external challenges. There isn't currently any youth representatives on the Mental Health Advisory board or the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission.



**Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission**

**District List**

**District 1: Shandara Gill  
(Koenig) Kayla Kumar**

**District 2: Denise Elerick  
(Friend) Heather Rogers**

**District 3: Cynthia Druley  
(Coonerty) Ben Rice**

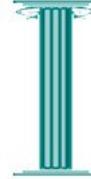
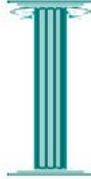
**District 4: Sandra Romero  
(Caput) Elias Gonzales**

**District 5: Beverly Brook  
(McPherson) David Lucio**

**Commissioners**  
**At Large: VACANT – Youth Representative**  
**VACANT – Youth Representative**  
**Jaime Marquez**  
**John Armstrong**  
**VACANT – Adult Representative**

**Ex-Officio: Judge Denine J. Guy, Juvenile  
Court**  
**Sara B. Ryan, Superintendent**  
**Juvenile Hall**

**Staff: Christine Bennett**



### Advisory Board Members



Xaloc Cabanes  
Chair/1st District



Greg Caput  
Board of Sup. Member



Serg Kagno  
Secretary/4th District



Hugh McCormick  
3rd District



Erika Miranda-Bartlett  
Co-chair/3rd District



Antonio Rivas  
4th District



Valerie Webb  
2nd District



Catherine Willis  
2nd District

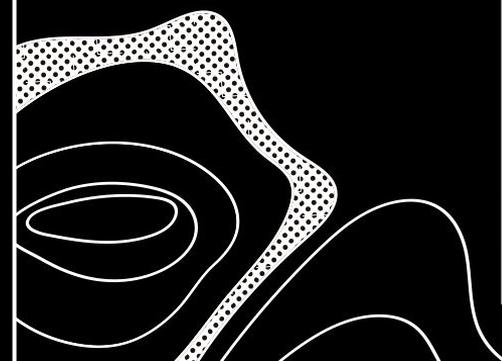
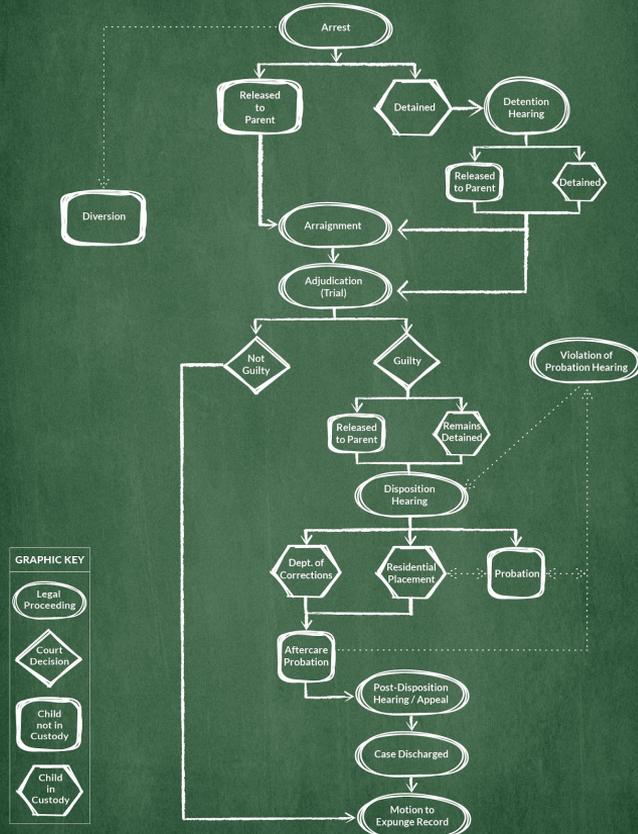
The image features a central text block on a black background. On either side of the text are stylized, white line-art depictions of human faces in profile, facing each other. The faces are composed of thick, flowing white outlines. Some areas, particularly around the eyes and hair, are filled with a fine white stippled pattern. The overall aesthetic is graphic and high-contrast.

# Societal Conditions that lead to incarceration

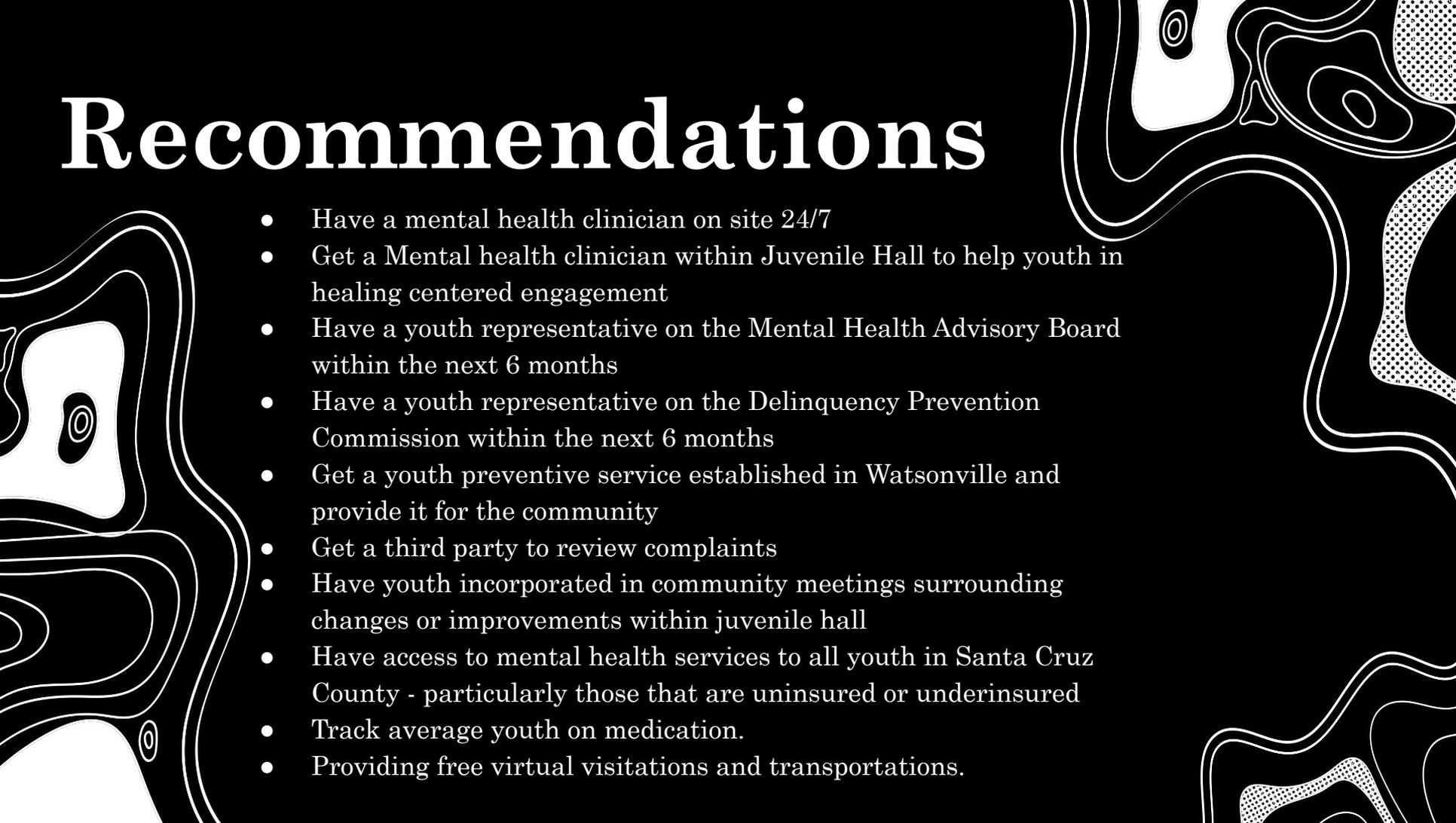
- Poverty
- Racial Inequities
- Mental Illness and lack of access
- Generational Trauma
- Inequalities in education
- Family Dynamics
- Community Wellness
- Substance Abuse

# Juvenile Court Process

IMAGINE BEING A CHILD  
AND HAVING TO NAVIGATE THIS SYSTEM  
WITHOUT A LAWYER



# Recommendations



- Have a mental health clinician on site 24/7
- Get a Mental health clinician within Juvenile Hall to help youth in healing centered engagement
- Have a youth representative on the Mental Health Advisory Board within the next 6 months
- Have a youth representative on the Delinquency Prevention Commission within the next 6 months
- Get a youth preventive service established in Watsonville and provide it for the community
- Get a third party to review complaints
- Have youth incorporated in community meetings surrounding changes or improvements within juvenile hall
- Have access to mental health services to all youth in Santa Cruz County - particularly those that are uninsured or underinsured
- Track average youth on medication.
- Providing free virtual visitations and transportations.