

SB 416 2024 - Adonijah Metcalf

My name is Adonijah Metcalf. I grew up on the Northside of Wichita, Kansas. My neighborhood, you know, I'm from 9th and Murdock. A community where it was believed to have the worst patrol police situations you can think of. It's like a movie, you know, you got them police officers who's always harassing you. They pull over drug dealers, not even taking them to jail. They just take what they got on 'em. That's just to paint the picture of it, I got friends who'd been killed by policemen.

I am a Youth Leader Intern with Progeny. We're a group located out of Wichita, Kansas. We rehabilitate our communities from just shared values. With the Debt Free Justice program, I see myself being an outlet. I want to be able to connect the people to the resources that they do need and feel comfortable doing it. Because there's a lot of people of my stature who feel like they don't belong in certain places, just because of who we really are, that's probably the best place for us to be.

People have fines and fees that they go through daily. And they're forced with a choice whether to pay their bills or pay the fines or the fees, buy clothes, buy food, or pay the fines or the fees. I think debt would be a place that the government would like you to be in so that you can be dependable on them for the stuff that you need.

Debt-free, in my eyes, would be having the wisdom and the knowledge to understand and navigate through life, as well as teach others. I have experiences from when I was a baby till now. Just recently, I was faced with a situation where a female ran the light and I ended up hitting her car, but I gotta pay the fines and the fees based on me not having insurance or my license being suspended due to fines from tickets from when I was a youth..

I'm supposed to pay something to the courts and if I don't pay it, then they would, my license is already suspended. So they, I guess go to the furthest extent. You can serve jail time over stuff like that. We come from a place where it's hard right now to even kind of get jobs as a youth, a young Black male at that, you feel me? As far as us, it's hard for us to get jobs right now. So it's like every day it's a battle. You got the police on you. You got people out here that's on you. You got a system literally built to ensure that you feel that type of thing.

Evictions, if we ain't paid the rent, we get evicted, get put out our household. But right before that, they don't even understand like, shoot, moms could have had court a week before that she had to come out of pocket for this ticket. I've lost jobs because of it. I ended up losing a job due to just being pulled over. We got pulled over and I had to

be at work at that same time. I ended up getting fired from that, but what's crazy is that they don't give you any restitution for it.

So I can get pulled over and lose my job, but then when I do need to make money for my car payments and stuff like that, what's going to be there now? The way these funds and the fees are set up, I wasn't able to finance my vehicle. So they took it away from me. That left me in a worse situation where I can't drive to apply for any jobs or anything like that.

There's a lot of people down here with no cars. We had a bad situation where it's no grocery stores or nothing on the Northside. So if you don't get a car, you're going to starve. Many instance fines and fees are the catalyst to these problems. I ask that you do what's in your power to see this bill through because I am just one story of a vast marginalized community. Join us as we reimagine what our youth justice system looks like.