

WHAT IS POP?

An Overview

Many things matter in addressing disparities. By supporting an evidenced based intervention effort like afterschool and mentoring programs offered through **PEN OR PENCIL (POP)**, culture, racial socialization and positive youth development for African American and other youth is addressed.

Students are encouraged to embark upon a personal journey, particularly those traditionally underrepresented in various areas. They are encouraged to pursue the freedom to excel and thrive as well as to discover a sense of identity, appreciation of heritage, and the determination to contribute to their families and communities.

Though technology is rapidly evolving and is replacing the use of *pens* or *pencils* as principle writing instruments for students, these terms form the name and the foundation for the **POP** mentoring approach.

A *pen's* effect can be permanent on a page and on a record. It can represent a destructive branding and disproportionate loss of freedom to youth who are just beginning their journey in life. For purposes of mentoring, the *pencil* affords the opportunity to erase errors and *write a new history* of alternatives and equality in the quest for progress and success.



POP, by design, integrates the robust use of history and social emotional learning techniques translated into today's contemporary parallels to address critical personal risk factors and experiences and to inspire transformational behavior in the lives of youth.

Mentors assist youth in their escape from new methods of psychological, physical, mental and any form of enslavement that might place their minds and futures in bondage. They serve as conductors in helping to guide youthful freedom seekers to new opportunities and to the full measure of their potential.



PEN OR PENCIL MENTORS IN PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS

"PASTORS ON PATROL"

- Promotes safe and healthy relationships with peers, based on shared interests and support.
- Encourages healthy lifestyle choices
- Supports positive organized activities
- Allows youth to participate in activities that enable them to be engaged in and feel attached to their community and local events.
- Places youth in mentoring tracks where they are able to make good decisions, use good judgment, come to understand the risks and consequences for their own decisions, set goals, and envision a future where their goals are achieved.
- In 2015, evidence-based findings of positive youth development were published by the Association of Black Psychology in the *Journal of Black Psychology*.

Since its founding by NAFJ in 2005, youth, primarily secondary through collegiate ages, are served through partnerships with national and local organizations of both faith and community, many who maintain direct official agreements with local education agencies (LEAs/schools – public and private).

As recommended and published by the *Elements of Effective Mentoring Practices* (2020), group mentoring programs should be built around a robust activity curriculum that guides the content and structure of group interactions over the course of the program. Since its inception, POP utilizes five history/social justice/youth development tracks:

- Nonviolence to No Violence
- Take A Stand To Keep A Seat
- What's L-O-V-E Got To Do With It?
- Let Me Read You Your Rights
- STEMulating Freedom and the Future

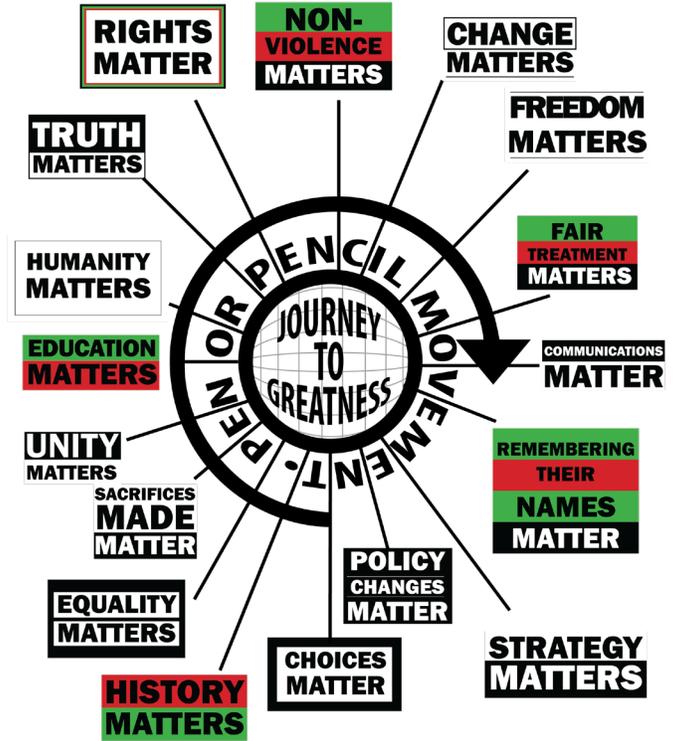
SERVING THIS PRESENT AGE

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

POP maintains formal partnerships with the 400 Years of African American History Commission as well as the National Park Service through the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program and the African American Civil Rights Network.

As of summer 2022, POP served 93 schools in 112 zip codes and eleven (11) states nationwide. 486 volunteers are screened and approved as volunteers in the following 2022-2023 locations:

- Anchorage/Eagle Rock, Alaska
- Pine Bluff, Arkansas
- Antelope Valley, California
- Norwalk/Bridgeport, Connecticut
- Washington, DC
- Kansas City, Kansas
- Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- Capital Heights, Maryland
- Kansas City, Missouri
- Florissant/St. Louis, Missouri
- Las Vegas, Nevada
- Denmark, South Carolina



In 2006, POP received endorsement from the **National Council for the Social Studies**. The curriculum series uses eight of 10 thematic strands of the National Standards for the Social Studies.



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