



FREEDOM TO DREAM

2022 Impact Report

IMAGINING A NEW WAY FORWARD

As I enter my second year as the Program Director of upEND Movement, I am both grateful for and excited by the work we are doing in the family policing abolition organizing community. The upEND team spent 2022 researching, writing, collaborating, and dreaming with a diverse group of people—including those impacted by the family policing system as well as other organizers, academics, and thought leaders. We created conversations around carceral logic and how this logic connects to the family policing system, we’ve contributed to national conversations on family policing system abolition, and we’ve facilitated our largest convening to date.

We continue to envision how upEND can grow and better serve those most impacted by the family policing system, and we look forward to a new year filled with projects that help the public learn more about the family policing system and invite us all to imagine a new way forward where families are supported and empowered.

Josie Pickens,
upEND Program Director



CHANGE THE CONVERSATION

We create and share resources that counter harmful popular narratives and equip community leaders to influence policy and bring about change.



FOSTER NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

We develop partnerships and support on-the-ground efforts to build a network of grassroots advocates and allies, led primarily by impacted youth and families.

Core Strategies



RESEARCH

We support and disseminate research that identifies the harms that result from family policing intervention and advances innovative and non-punitive means of care that truly prioritize the safety and support of children, families, and communities.

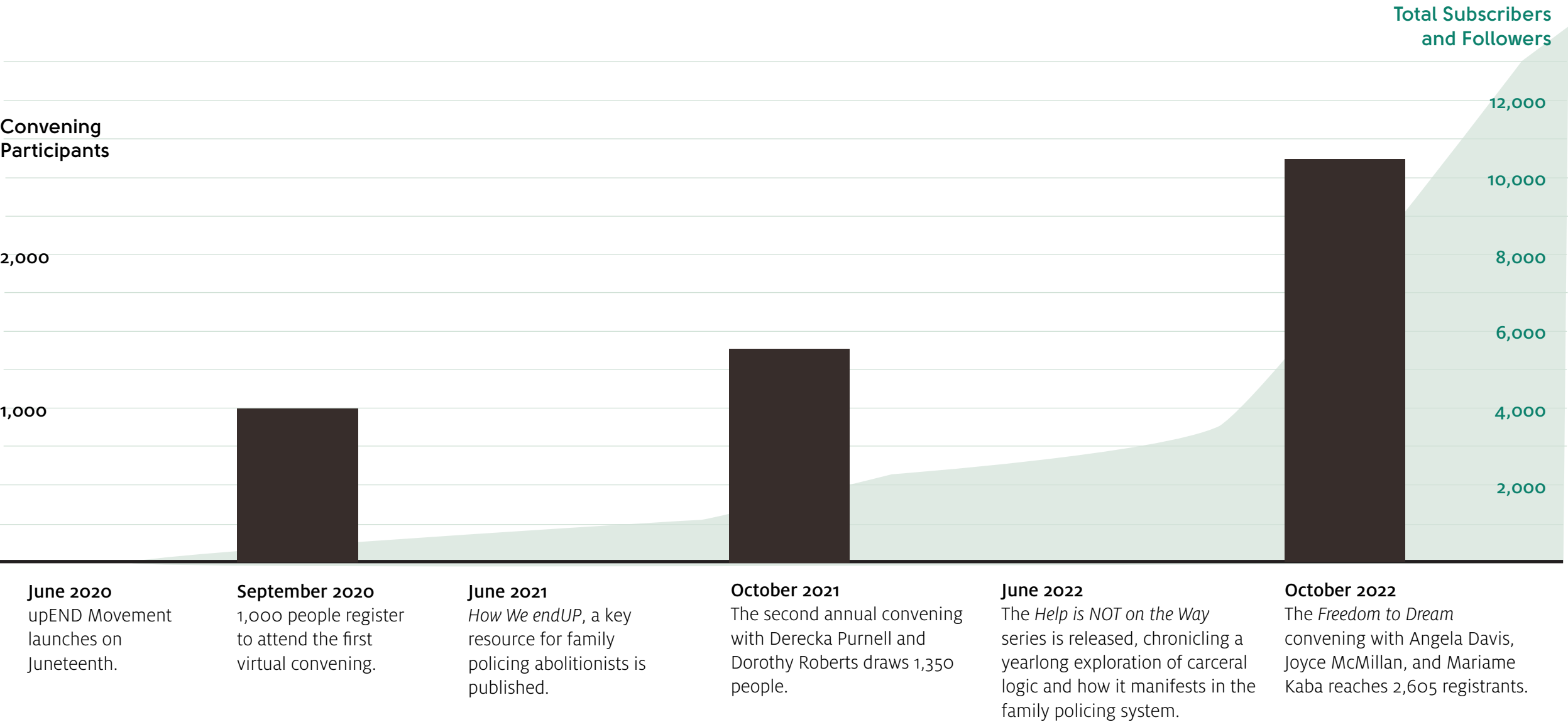


SUPPORT PRAGMATIC AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Our framework for change, *How We endUP*, provides seven actionable steps toward eliminating the family policing system, and creating the conditions that truly support child, family, and community well-being. We also advocate for learning from, supporting, and sustaining the efforts of others who are actively innovating and imagining.

GROWING A MOVEMENT

On June 19, 2020, upEND launched a collaborative movement to protect children and reimagine how to support families. On Juneteenth, a day synonymous with liberation, we invited abolitionists, activists, and families to join us to dismantle the family policing system and work in community to imagine and build new approaches. Together, we have grown, we have learned, and we have helped shift the conversation about addressing the harms inherent in the family policing system while centering abolition as the solution.



CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

To date, upEND has published 19 articles and resources and given 42 presentations and interviews.

Our first publication, “It is not a broken system, it is a system that needs to be broken: the upEND movement to abolish the child welfare system” is the most viewed article in the *Journal of Public Child Welfare* with 15,000 views.

While most Americans believe harmful narratives about the child welfare system, the popularity of this publication reveals that there is deep interest in challenging these ideas. People are looking for ways to support families and communities that do not perpetuate the harm of the family policing system.

It is not a broken system, it is a system that needs to be broken: the upEND movement to abolish the child welfare system

Alan J. Dettlaff, Kristen Weber, Maya Pandey, Reba Boyd, Bill Bottoms, and Leonard Burton

ABSTRACT
The child welfare system disproportionately harms Black children and families through systemic over-surveillance, over-involvement, and the resulting adverse outcomes associated with foster care. Ending this harm will only be achieved when the forcible surveillance and separation of children from their parents is no longer viewed as an acceptable form of intervention. This paper describes the upEND movement, a collaborative movement aimed at abolishing the child welfare system as we know it and reimagining how we as a society support child, family, and community safety and well-being.

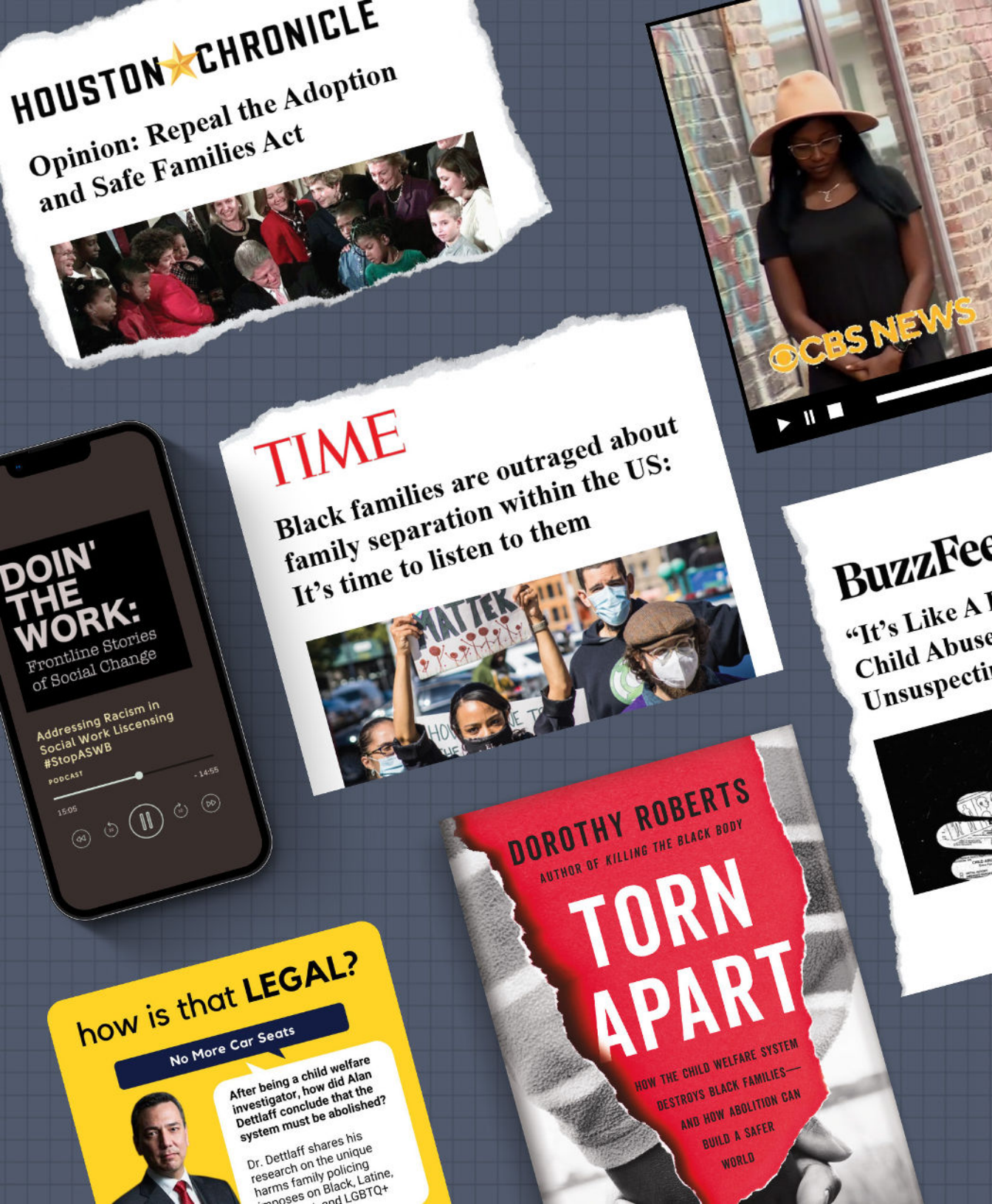
Since our launch in 2020, we have been mentioned in...

1,200
tweets

162
academic articles
and books

16
news articles

1
legal opinion



November 10, 2022

164625

In re G. M. DIXSON, Minor.

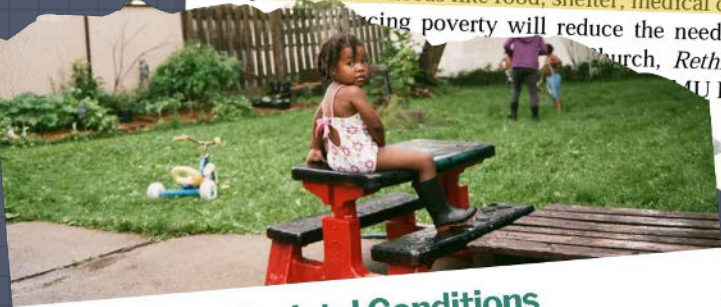
SC: 164625
COA: 358376
Wayne CC Family Division:
2017-001531-NA

Richard
Elizabeth T.
Megan K. Cavanagh
Elizabeth M. Welch,
Justices

On the application for leave to appeal, the Court has considered the application. Since implementing this court rule, Washington, D.C., has had one of the largest decreases in children entering foster care in the country. *Id.*

Along with expressly requiring courts to evaluate the harm of removal, our legal framework could also integrate the limited-guardianship process into the termination-of-parental-rights adjudication, requiring courts to take a final look at less-restrictive arrangements before full termination. Such a change would recognize that for many children, maintaining a connection to siblings, relatives, and even their neighborhood is immensely important for their mental and physical well-being. There are many creative solutions to keep children connected to their family and place of origin that don't require a parent to have full custody.

One of the most effective ways to solve the problems of our child welfare system is to reduce the need for it. The more we move solutions upstream, the less we will need downstream interventions. A shift in priorities from punishing families on the back end to supporting families on the front end is needed. Because we already know which factors in a parent's life might lead that parent to neglect or abuse their children, we can prevent many of them. There is a clear link between poverty and child neglect. In some cases, this is because "child neglect" and "poverty" are conflated: neglect is a stand-in for an inability to provide basic needs like food, shelter, medical care. *How We endUP* at 7. Any program reducing poverty will reduce the need to get courts and lawyers involved in child welfare. *Church, Rethinking Foster Care: Why Our Current System Fails*, 100 U.L. Rev F 123, 137 (2020).



Transform Societal Conditions So Families and Communities Can Thrive

The upEND Movement seeks to end state-sanctioned separation of children from their families and communities. To do so, we must collectively address the societal failures and disinvestment in Black, Native, and Latinx communities which have resulted in food insecurity, poverty, lack of affordable and safe housing, and lack of meaningful prevention services, including effective and readily available substance use and mental health and well-being services. Children and families should be supported through responses that promote healing and well-being, rather than surveillance and punishment. This involves creating societal conditions where children, youth, and families can live safely, have enough to eat, have adequate financial and social supports, and have equitable opportunities to thrive in strong and healthy communities. We support increased

This Michigan Supreme Court dissent
cites our "How We endUP" publication.

SHIFTING LAW AND POLICY

- A mother in Michigan was denied an appeal to the termination of her parental rights. Chief Justice Bridget Mary McCormack of the Michigan Supreme Court cited "How We endUP", a key publication from upEND, in a dissenting opinion. Justice McCormack writes, "I wish this case was an outlier. But in ten years reviewing records in termination cases, I have seen many just like this where our statutory process for protecting children has failed them."
- upEND is strategically positioned at the University of Houston, which gives us opportunities for face-to-face coalition building with future social workers and policymakers.

November 2022

Hi Josie,
Thanks again for coming to our class!

Your talk was so impactful for the students. I checked in with them afterwards, and got feedback that they were very moved, and thinking about CPS and the family policing system in a new way that they had never before considered. The work you and the upEND Movement do is so important-- thank you for sharing your time with the class. I am certainly still reflecting with my friends and colleagues on your talk as well.

All the best,

Johanna C. Luttrell, Ph.D.
Hobby School of Public Affairs, University of Houston





upEND participated in the Black Mothers March in 2022.

FOSTERING NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Through our annual convening, we strengthen the capacity of organizers, activists, system workers, and nonprofit staff working on abolitionist campaigns moving toward the end of family policing. We also work to facilitate partnerships with and across these campaigns as we work in community toward our shared goals. Since our earliest beginnings, we have understood that upEND is but a small part of the broader movement to end family policing and we continue to be inspired and honored to collaborate in this work together.



Joyce McMillan



Angela Y. Davis

Joyce McMillan, Angela Y. Davis, and Mariame Kaba keynote the 2022 How We endUP Convening.

@LynnBethie

Wow the [@upendmovement](#) convening was top tier! The space created specifically for those impacted by the family policing system & having their experiences honored is incredible! The expo-Visualizing Abolition display-amaze! So excited to hear Mariame Kaba tomorrow. [#howweendUP22](#)



@freechildprjct

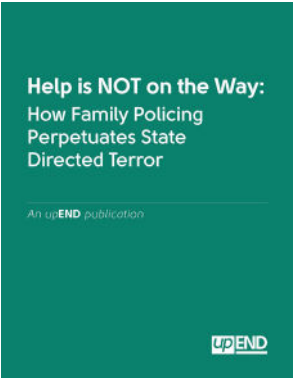
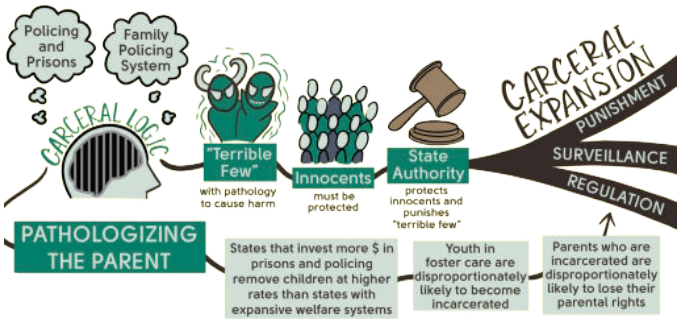
feeling restored, humbled, and inspired after hearing from [@prisonculture](#) on the ways we can try shit out, be hopeful, and dream while fighting against the prison industrial complex and all of its insidious tentacles. [@upendmovement](#) [#howweendUP22](#)





RESEARCHING AND WRITING

Despite the myth of benevolence perpetuated by the family policing system, a large body of research has documented the harms that result from family policing intervention. upEND engages with leading scholars along with those directly impacted by the family policing system to develop timely and relevant research papers that document the true nature of family policing and the harm and destruction that result. In 2022, upEND published a series of papers identifying and describing the carceral logic of the family policing system through its mechanisms of surveillance, regulation, and punishment. In this series, titled *Help is NOT on the Way: How Family Policing Perpetuates State Directed Terror*, we trace the development of carceral logic and demonstrate that this logic is as deeply embedded in the family policing system as it is in our systems of prisons and policing. We also contribute original research papers in scholarly journals across the fields of social work, law, and others in order to continually challenge the dominant narrative and shift the conversation toward the need for abolition.



the framework

DOES THE **REFORM** OR **ABOLITIONIST STEP**

ACHIEVE THIS **OUTCOME** ?



SUPPORTING PRAGMATIC AND INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

During our October convening, we introduced a new resource for organizers and community leaders. Modeled after a parallel document by Critical Resistance, it guides exploration of questions like, “Does this proposal reduce the reach of the family policing system or promote healing for children and families?” These questions are a reflection of the world we want to build, where the need for a family policing system is obsolete.

Abolition is often dismissed as a utopian fantasy, but it’s much more sensible than reforming a system that was designed to harm Black and Indigenous children. Safer children, families, and communities through abolition is not only urgent—it’s possible.



@RGreeningLaw

Letting the learning from [@upendmovement](#) conference settle in my mind and really sitting with [@prisonculture](#) keynote yesterday reminding us that people imagined and built the systems of oppression we have now. We can and will collectively imagine something radically different.



FINANCIALS

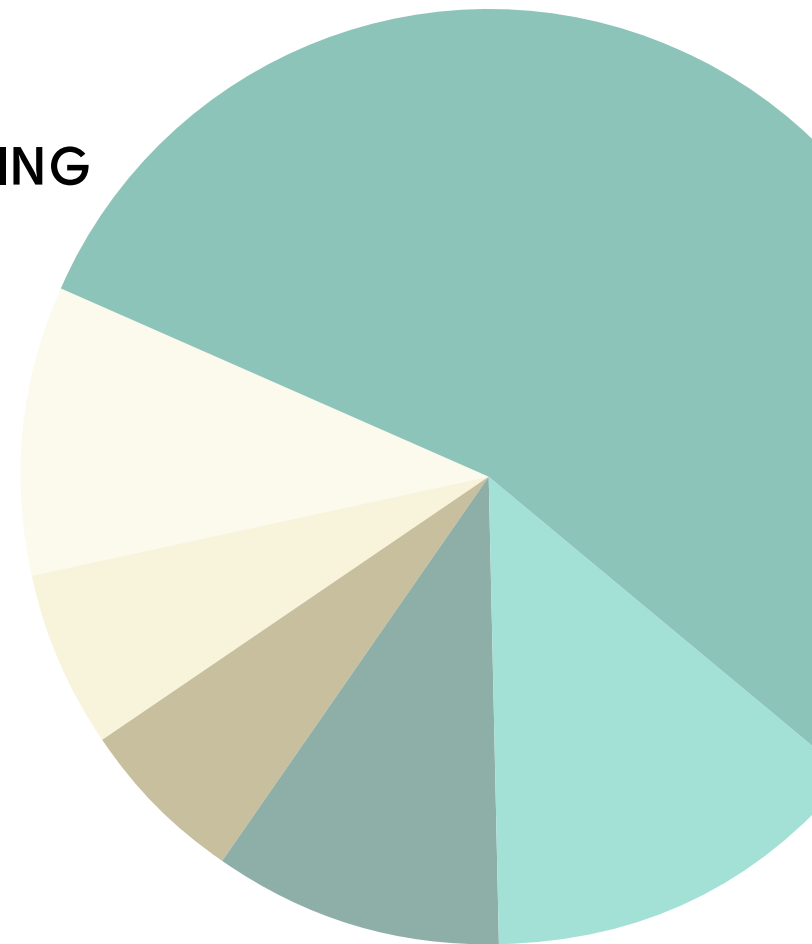
upEND is a national movement housed at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work as an initiative that is funded entirely through grants and donations. We rely on the generosity of organizations and individual donors to support and grow this movement.

So far, we have been funded primarily by foundations, but our strategy for continued growth is to increase efforts to generate more grassroots support. Abolition is gaining national attention, but we have witnessed that speaking truth to systemic power is risky and movements like upEND have become increasingly vulnerable to attacks. It is more important than ever that we build this movement in community.

ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET \$261,200

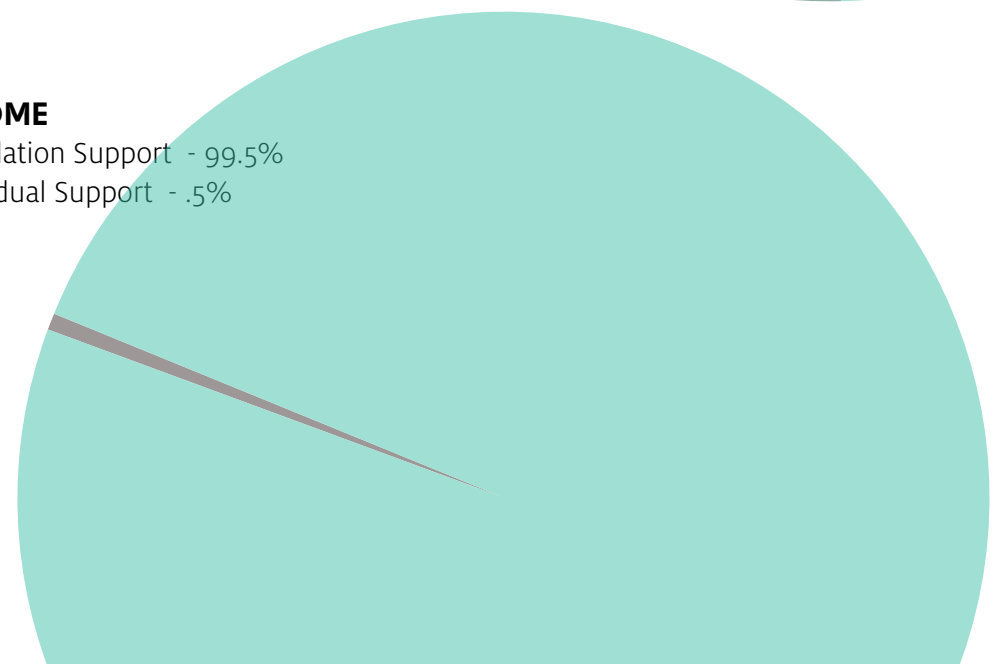
EXPENSES

Staff - 55%
Advisors - 14%
Content Creators - 10%
Researchers - 6%
Communications - 6%
Convening - 10%



INCOME

Foundation Support - 99.5%
Individual Support - .5%





CONTINUING TO DREAM

In 2023, we look forward to growing the movement and continuing to invest in public education and coalition building. We will launch the first podcast that will focus specifically on family policing abolition. We will continue to produce more research-based resources that will challenge public knowledge about the family policing system. We will curate an annual convening that will bring together persons impacted by the family policing system, along with other organizers, academics, and people committed to abolition. We are committed to abolishing the family policing system and other harmful systems and creating the future of our dreams.