

Concert Chorus “Gives Hope” to the NJISJ Efforts to Close Jamesburg.



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The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice’s rally to close the 150 year old Jamesburg Juvenile Detention Center for Boys began with an inspirational song by our Concert Chorus, “Give Us Hope.”

Donald Morris, Choral Director, introduced the song and spoke of the importance of “hope” in the lives of everyone, especially the boys and young men imprisoned at

Jamesburg.

Although the school year officially ended a week ago, the students volunteered their time to participate in the rally outside the gates of the prison. They were joined by



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more than 300 others who had strong feelings about the future of Jamesburg. Individuals and groups from New Jersey and the east coast joined representatives from the NJISJ for the



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Ryan Haygood, the Executive Director of NJISJ, used his visit this Spring to NBCS and his discussion with our students to frame his remarks:

I recently spoke to a class full of bright students at the Newark Boys Chorus School about New Jersey's youth prisons. I talked about how kids of all races commit offenses at similar rates, but two-thirds of kids in the state's youth prisons are black.

By contrast, less than six percent of kids in youth prison in the state, or less than 15 kids, are white. This gives New Jersey the third-highest black/white youth incarceration disparity rate in the nation.

I asked the students: "Why is that?"

Many hands shot up, and one sixth-grader said, "Because they don't think

we are kids. They see us as criminals."

Me: "What should we do with a youth justice system that produces these kinds of results?"

Another student answered: "End it, and create a new one."

At the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, we are preparing to do just that -- and we need your help.



Donald Morris addressing the crowd outside the gates to the Jamesburg Juvenile Detention Center for Boys