

Silenced Voices: Addressing Developmental and Racial Disparities in the Exercise of Miranda Rights

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Background

Picture a teenager forced to confess under intense police interrogation, unable to fully grasp the meaning of his Miranda rights – would justice stand a chance in such a system? This scenario isn’t hypothetical. It is a recurring reality in the U.S. justice system where the vulnerabilities of youth, especially youth of color, are often overlooked.

Why Does This Matter?

- 1. Vulnerability: Youth from marginalized communities are more susceptible to coercive interrogation tactics like isolation and manipulation. Racial biases are amplified when youth are seen as older and more developed than they actually are.
- 2. Legislative Gaps: Legislative frameworks fail to address the specific vulnerabilities of juveniles. For example, relying on parental presence instead of mandated legal counsel during interrogations leave youth vulnerable to coercion.
- 3. Systematic Bias: Racial biases are a trend often seen during interrogations. Minority youth are disproportionately target which leaves to phenomena such as adutification and harsher treatments and/or punishments.
- 4. Human Rights Violations: International law emphasizes the need to protect children from harm such as manipulation. However, the U.S. clearly lacks the legislation to abide by such standards.
- 5. False Confessions: Wrongful convictions are the result of false confessions. Coercive techniques like the Reid technique are common even after it is proven to elicit false confessions, particularly from impressionable youth.

Methods

Literature Review Analysis

Sources

- Case Studies
- Legal documents pertaining to youth offenders, legal documents, human rights organizations
- Quantitative data on wrongful convictions
- Qualitative data on personal experience and expert opinions from legal practitioners

Tests

Analyze data to identify patterns in coercion and racial biases
→ Comparative legal analysis between U.S. and international juvenile justice framework
→ Assess impact of existing interrogation techniques on youth through case study
→ Review international human rights protocol to evaluate compliance gaps

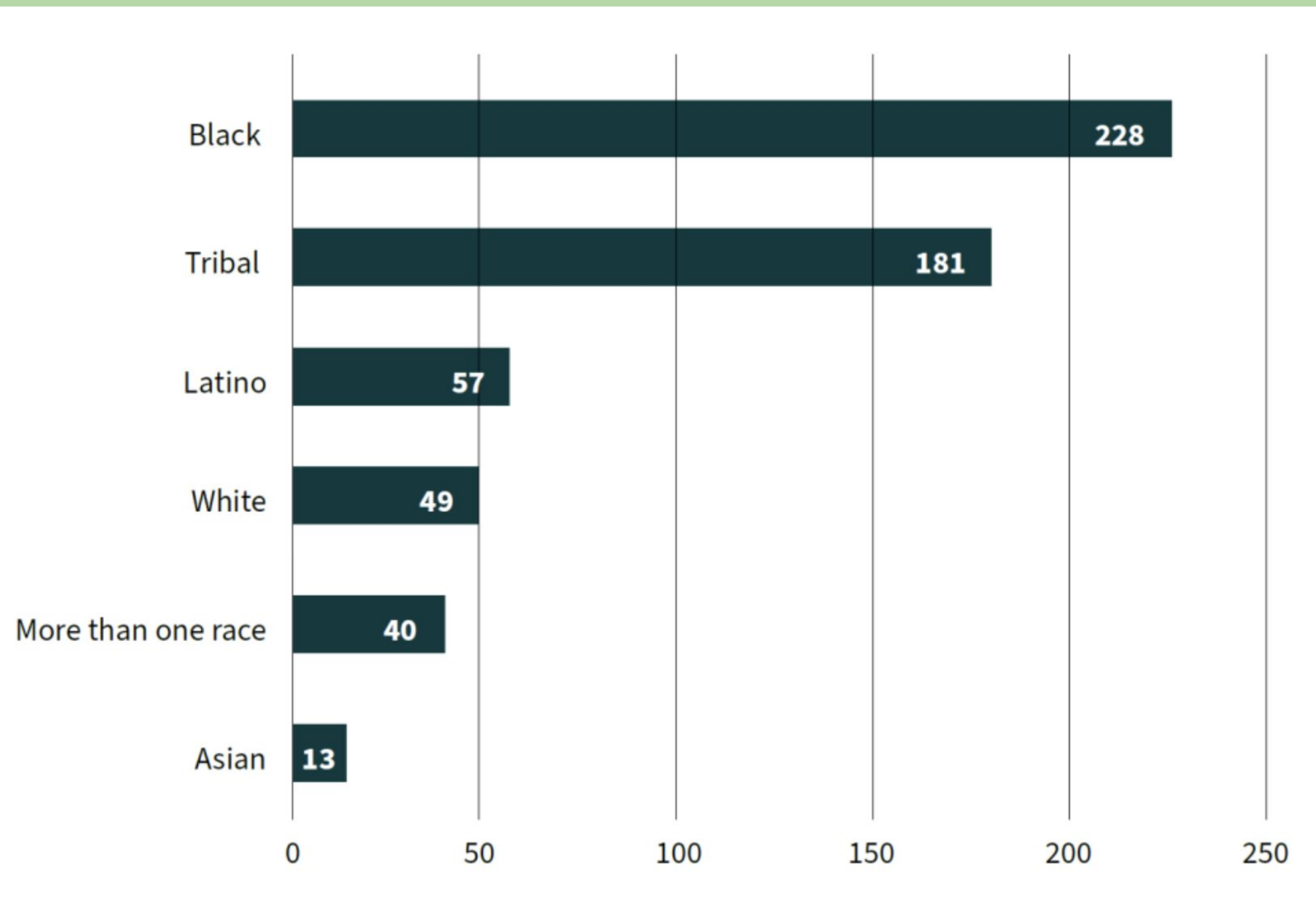
Results:

Factors Causing Disparities in Youth Miranda Rights and Interrogation Outcomes

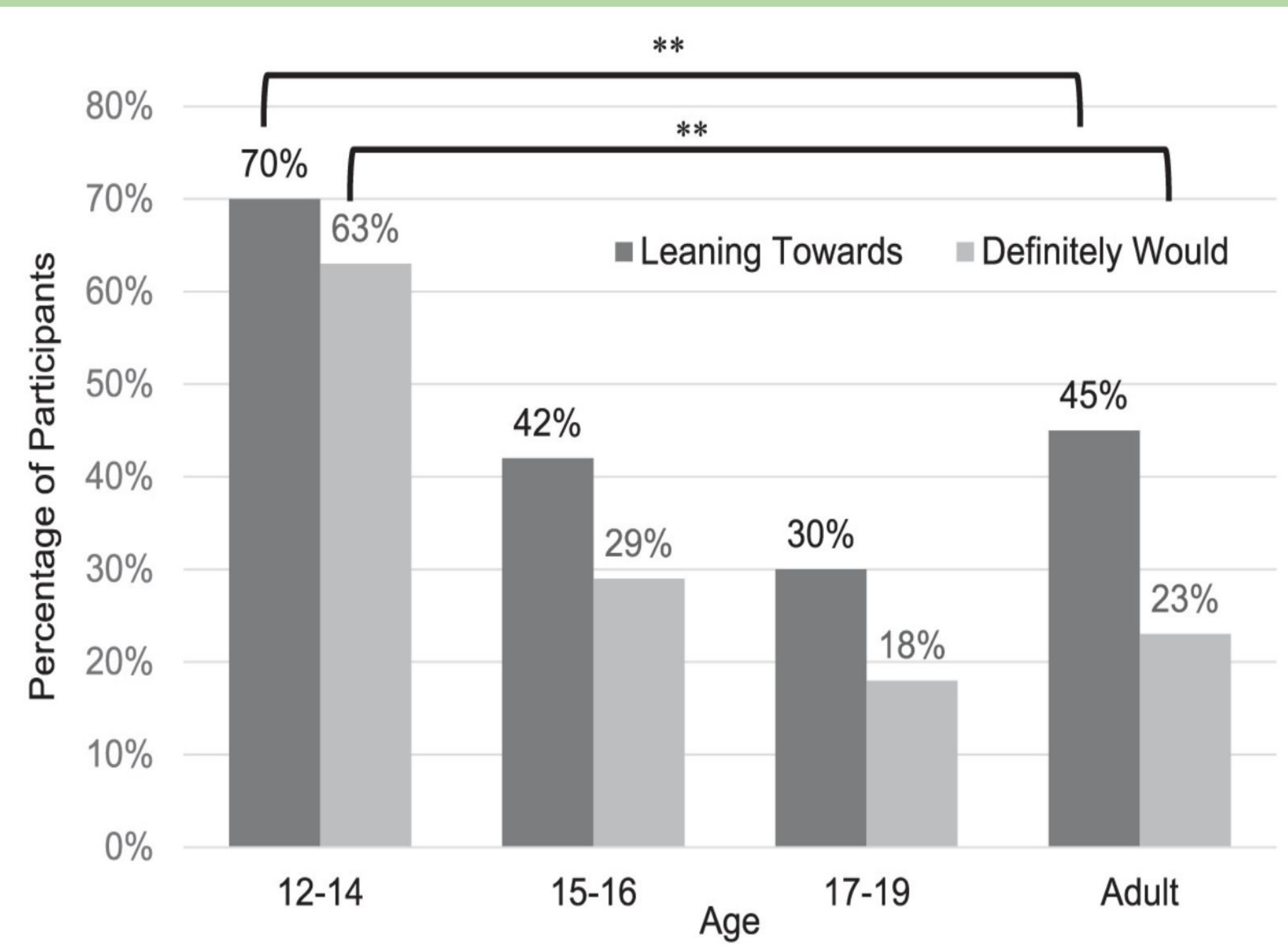
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|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| → Legal Representation | → Socioeconomic Status |
| → Racial Bias | → Educational Disparities |
| → Interrogation Techniques | → Implicit Bias in Law Enforcement |

Youth of color are disproportionately impacted by coercive interrogation tactics, leading to a higher rate of false confessions and wrongful convictions.

Youth Incarceration Rates by Race and Ethnicity



Self-Reported Likelihood of False Confession by Age Group



Legal Analysis

U.S. interrogation practices for youth often violate constitutional rights (5th Amendment) and international standards (ICCPR).

Key Legal Gaps

- 1. Court Cases
 - Miranda v. Arizona (1966): Establishes individuals must be informed of their right to remain silent; youth do not fully understand these rights
 - J.B.D. v. North Carolina (2017): Ruled a minor’s age is relevant when determining custody and interrogation standards; coercive methods like the Reid technique continue despite this precedent
 - Doody v. Ryan (2011): Juvenile subject to long interrogation without understanding his rights and coerced into confession; lack of age-appropriate methods
- 2. Racial Bias and Adultification
 - Youth of color are often treated as adults, contradicting ICCPR Article 10’s mandate for humane treatment and separation from adults
 - 5th Amendment of Constitution protects against self-incrimination

Discussion

Racial and Implicit Biases

- Youth of color are often "adultified," leading to harsher interrogation tactics.
- These biases contribute to higher rates of false confessions among minority youth.

Socioeconomic Inequality

- Lower-income families are less likely to afford legal representation.
- Youth from these backgrounds face greater pressure during questioning without counsel.

Educational Disadvantages

- Many juveniles lack the education to fully understand their Miranda rights.
- This knowledge gap makes them more vulnerable to waiving rights unknowingly.

Inadequate Legal Protections

- Mandatory legal representation during interrogation is not consistently enforced.
- Coercive techniques like the Reid method remain widely used and disproportionately affect marginalized youth.

Conclusion

Recommendations for Reform

- Mandate the presence of legal counsel during all juvenile interrogations.
- Improve law enforcement training to address and reduce implicit bias.
- Align U.S. practices with international standards, such as those in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

