

Gabe
High School Student
LRC Youth Network

The most important thing a teen needs is to feel comfortable and accepted in a school environment. The thought of fully dressed police officers' wandering around the hallways and their use of force on students as if they were pulled out of the car during a traffic stop is definitely traumatizing. As being a black youth affected by a prone restraint is the absolute most discouraging thing not only to me but others when it comes to hope in our SRO's. I was only in fifth grade weighing less than 100 pounds when an officer put me in a prone restraint, putting his weight on his knees down on my upper back. My chest was compressed to the ground making it harder for me to breath and take in air. Truly it hurts to see other young people go through this as well, mind you our minds are still growing and there is room for MISTAKES as we learn from them.

I am a strong believer in de-escalation strategies. Often officers like to exert some time of power or dominance in heated situations, Find this not to be useful as it only adds more fire to the flame. Rarely see calm approaches from SRO's, students are always told to be quiet and OBEY. Which is stupid to me as if our voices and emotions don't matter in the eyes of an officer/SRO let alone most adults. If you're going to be dealing with young students wouldn't it be just to know how to talk to them, understand them, listen to them, support them etc. I never thought it was okay to use compressive holds on someone else's child just imagine if it was your kid. Empathy is missing from SRO's encounters with students.