

CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

May 2009 Newsletter

The Campaign for Youth Justice is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing, and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system.

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ACROSS THE COUNTRY

North Carolina Raise the Age Bill Passes House Committees

This month, the much-anticipated Youth Accountability Act (H 1414) passed out of North Carolina's House Judiciary II Committee and on to Appropriations, where it will be considered as part of the budget. This bill, part of the legislative agenda for Action for Children North Carolina (CFYJ's North Carolina partner), would raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 16 to 18 over a six year period, ensuring adequate and appropriate services for youth. The bill, sponsored by Representative Alice Bordsen (D-63), also establishes a task force to implement the Act.

This is the most support the issue has had since efforts began decades ago to raise the age!

For more information on how you can help, contact Brandy Bynum at brandy@ncchild.org.

Illinois PTA Recommends Transfer Reform

In 1999, the Illinois PTA first published a report with treatment recommendations for children in substitute care and the justice system. This month, it published a revised version of the report, entitled *Ten Years of Progress*, including some recommendations from the original report and some new recommendations.

The report's recommendations regarding youth transfer to adult court include the following:

- Support the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and adequate appropriations for its provisions.... (1999)
- Raise the jurisdiction of the juvenile court to all youth under the age of 18. (1999)
- Support without exception that the jurisdiction of the juvenile court must be based on age and not on the alleged crime. The determination to transfer a minor to the criminal court for trial as an adult must be made by the juvenile court, not by automatic transfer statutes. (1999)
- Support provisions to reduce disproportionate representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system. (new)
- Support expungement of juvenile records and court discretion in sex offender registration of juveniles. (new)
- Study the elimination of the sentencing of juveniles to Life without Parole. (new)

The report also includes recommendations for the state to support the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice in rehabilitating juvenile offenders.

The report can be found at: <http://www.illinoispta.org/user/Ten%20Years%20of%20Progress.pdf>.

FROM THE HILL

JJDPA Reauthorization Needs You to Sign On to Support Letter!

On March 24, 2009, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2009 (S. 678) was reintroduced in the United States Senate for the 111th Congress by U.S. Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Arlen Specter (D-PA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), and Herb Kohl (D-WI). Learn more about the JJDPA at:

<http://www.act4jj.org/about.html>.

The Act4JJ campaign of the National Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Coalition is calling for state and local organizations across the nation to sign on to a letter in support of S. 678. The goal is to have 500 organizations (10 from each State) signed on by Tuesday, June 2nd. Please share this letter with your networks.

The letter can be viewed at:

http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/S.678SignOnLetter_000.doc.

To sign on, email organizer@cfyj.org.

Support Grows for Congressman Murphy's Juvenile Justice Improvement Act

On April 2, 2009, Congressman Chris Murphy (D-CT) reintroduced legislation to reform federal juvenile justice policy to mirror many of the successes in juvenile justice reform in Connecticut. The bill is H.R. 1873, the Juvenile Justice Improvement Act, which Murphy hopes will be included in the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A).

Since last month, many members of the Connecticut Congressional delegation have signed on as co-sponsors to H.R. 1873, including Congresswoman DeLauro (CT-03) and Congressmen Courtney (CT-02) and Himes (CT-04). In addition, Congressman Murphy gave a 5-minute speech on the House floor in support of the bill, which can be viewed on the Congressman's YouTube channel at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMkmpFMffY4&feature=channel_page.

Action Item: To get the support of the entire Connecticut delegation behind H.R. 1873, we are asking constituents of Congressman John Larson (CT-01) to call Congressman Larson's DC office at (202) 225-2265 and ask Congressman Larson to co-sponsor H.R. 1873.

To find out if you are a constituent of Congressman Larson, visit

www.house.gov and type your zip code into the "Find Your Representative" tool at the top right corner of the page.

Youth PROMISE Act Reaches 114 Co-Sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives

On May 7, 2009, the Campaign for Youth Justice co-sponsored a Youth Advocacy Day to garner support for the Youth PROMISE Act, H.R. 1064/S. 435.

The event started on May 6th with a screening of the film *Crips & Bloods: Made in America*, which was hosted by Representatives Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Mike Castle (R-DE). The screening was attended by the film's producers, Baron Davis and Cash Warren, and Los Angeles City Councilmember Tony Cárdenas.

On May 7th, a juvenile justice forum was held in support of the bill with Congressman Scott, Councilmember Tony Cárdenas, Sheriff Gabe Morgan from the City of Newport News, and Cash

Warren, Baron Davis, and Khalid Samad with Peace in the Hood, a grassroots organization based in Cleveland (www.peaceinthehood.com).

Following the forum, organizations went to visit their Congressional representatives to urge them to support the Youth PROMISE Act, while other organizations made hundreds of phone calls. As a result of these and other efforts, as of Friday, May 22nd, the Youth PROMISE Act has 114 co-sponsors in the House!

More information on the Youth PROMISE Act can be found at the following link:

http://www.bobbyscott.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=291&Itemid=86

To view a summary of the bill or to check the current status of the legislation, please visit

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

Action items - You can support the Youth PROMISE Act by:

- Calling or writing a letter to your Senators to co-sponsor and support S. 435;
- Calling or writing a letter to your Representative to co-sponsor and support H.R. 1064; or
- Signing your organization on as a supporter of the bill by contacting Tara Andrews at Andrews@juvjustice.org.

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RESEARCH & POLICY

OJJDP Releases New Data on Juvenile Crime

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has published "Juvenile Arrests 2007." This 12-page bulletin draws on data from the FBI's "Crime in the United States 2007" to analyze trends in juvenile arrests. While the overall downward trend of juvenile crime since the mid-1990s continued in 2007, youth of color and girls increased their involvement in the justice system. Even with the downward trend in juvenile arrests, the report warned that law enforcement records may overestimate juvenile responsibility for crime, given that law enforcement agencies are more likely to clear (or "close") crimes that juveniles commit than those committed by adults.

Key findings were:

- Law enforcement agencies in the United States made an estimated 2.18 million arrests of persons under age 18. Overall, there were 2% fewer juvenile arrests in 2007 than in 2006, and juvenile violent crime arrests declined 3%.
- The proportion of violent crimes cleared and attributed to juveniles has been rather constant in recent years, holding between 12% and 13% from 1996 through 2007.
- Juvenile arrests for violence declined between 2006 and 2007.

- Between 1998 and 2007, the number of arrests in most offense categories declined more for juveniles than for adults.
- In 2007, 19% of arrests involving youth who were eligible in their State for processing in the juvenile justice system were handled within law enforcement agencies and the youth were released, 70% were referred to juvenile court, and 9% were referred directly to criminal court.
- Most major crimes have continued the downward trend that has been happening since the mid-'90s, with minor upticks for murder and larceny-theft and a continued upturn for robbery.
- Boys experienced an overall downward trend in arrest rates.
- Black youth continue to be overrepresented in juvenile arrests. The racial disparity between whites and blacks in juvenile arrests reached 5-to-1. In 2007, although black youth accounted for just 17% of the youth population ages 10 through 17, black juveniles were involved in 51% of juvenile Violent Crime Index arrests and 32% of juvenile Property Crime Index arrests.

Read the full report at: <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/225344.pdf>.

Models for Change Launches New Web Resource

The Models for Change initiative has launched a new resource to support effective, fair and developmentally sound juvenile justice policies. The new www.modelsforchange.net website offers up-to-date information about key research, publications and accomplishments in the field. Visit the site to see the national calendar, learn about new developments and upcoming events, and subscribe for updates.

Models for Change is a national initiative funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to accelerate reform of juvenile justice systems across the country with focused on efforts in 16 select states.

CFYJ Honors Its First Student Paper Competition Winner

This year the Campaign for Youth Justice was happy to debut its Student Paper Competition. Honored with dozens of wonderful papers written on the topic of juvenile transfer to adult court, the Campaign selected for the \$500 prize a paper by Jordan Bechtold, a graduate student at University of California, Irvine, entitled "A Tale of Two Courts: How do the Behaviors and Needs of Adult Court Youths Differ from Those of Juvenile Court Youths?"

Ms. Bechtold conducted her own study and concluded that youth in adult court had the same rates of institutional victimization and the same need for protection and educational services as youth in the juvenile justice system.

The Campaign interviewed Jordan Bechtold to find out how she became interested in juvenile justice and what inspired her to write this paper.

1. *What do you study at UC Irvine?*

I am a first year graduate student and I've been in school for nine months. I work in a lab with developmental psychology expert and Professor Elizabeth Cauffman. We study juvenile justice in general, specifically on the treatment of antisocial behavior and the problem of externalizing behavior in adolescents. I am interested in the whole issue of transfer and when it is appropriate to transfer youth to the adult court and if it is appropriate.

2. *How did you become interested in juvenile justice?*

I think I first became interested in it just by reading the newspaper and reading about various cases where there would be a little blurb about 'this person might be tried as an adult' and it struck me as odd that this is a child. Probably in high school is when I first became aware of different things that are happening. I did a roundabout thing in college and ended up in psychology, with a focus on a lot of social injustice stuff.

3. *How did this paper idea and study come about?*

This study [contains] data that belongs to my adviser, Elizabeth Cauffman. It is a large study with all sorts of attitudinal and psychology measures. This is one little piece of it that I was interested in. And I just decided one day to look and see if there were differences between adult court youth and juvenile court youth housed in the same facility, and there were. I don't think that there is any research on what it is like for the youth to be kept together, which is significant especially since so many states that have blended sentencing, where in theory if they go through the adult court, they do get juvenile sanctions.

4. *Do you have an interest in examining juvenile justice or the issue of transfer in the future?*

I definitely see myself staying in research. I want to be a university professor and working on these same issues, and right now I'm really bitten by this transfer bug and hoping to keep following up with different studies.

The Campaign for Youth Justice plans to hold a paper competition again next year. If you are interested in applying for next year's competition, please check our website, <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/facts.html>. Information on next year's competition will be posted in the coming months.

Colorado Group Publishes Report on the Dangers of Adult Jail

This month, the Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition released a report, *Caging Children in Crisis*, detailing the dangers of placing youth in adult jails and offering support of a new bill to better protect Colorado's kids.

Under Colorado law, a youth who is charged as an adult is held pretrial in an adult jail without considering whether the youth could be held safely in a juvenile detention facility. The report found that Colorado's jails were neither built nor equipped to hold youth. They lack developmentally appropriate programs and structure, and staff have limited training to prepare them to work with incarcerated youth. Because youth are at greater risk of abuse, they are often kept in isolation, which further denies them access to programs and recreation that is available to adult inmates. These conditions can lead to acts of self-harm and suicide.

The Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition supports H.B. 09-1231, which would allow transferred youth to be kept in juvenile detention facilities unless a judge determines that placement in an adult jail is more appropriate.

Read the full report at:

http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/Caging_Children_in_Crisis_-_Final.pdf.

California Appeals Court Overturns Harsh Youth Sentence

Congratulations to the Equal Justice Initiative (www.eji.org) on their recent legal victory in California! On April 31, 2009, a California appeals court overturned a life without parole sentence for Antonio de Jesus Nuñez, who was tried as an adult in 2001 for an offense he committed when he was 14. Nuñez's case was unique, not only in his age at the time of the offense, but also in that he was "the only known offender across the country and around the world" who received such a harsh sentence for a crime that caused no injury. Nuñez was convicted for a kidnapping and ransom.

The opinion of the appeals court that overturned Nunez's sentence cited "his youth, the lack of injury to any victim, and the circumstance that LWOP is not a sentencing option [even] for kidnapers his age who-unlike [Nuñez]-murder their victims." Given that Nuñez was the only known person in the world to receive such a sentence for a non-homicide, no-injury case, the court found that the sentence violated the Eighth Amendment against arbitrary and capricious punishment.

The court cited Roper v. Simmons in its opinion, and it found California's law on kidnapping for ransom problematic in how it imposes punishment on juveniles in general as well as how it applies to Nuñez specifically.

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MEDIA WRAP

Congratulations to Mothers and Organization of Distinction!

This month, the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJNN) and the Campaign for Youth Justice honored four special mothers with the National Mother of Distinction Award, and one special organization received the National Organization of Distinction Award. The National Mother of Distinction Award is presented each Mother's Day to one or more mothers who have made an outstanding contribution to the juvenile justice field through working for reform in the juvenile justice system or changing the practice of trying, sentencing, or incarcerating youth in the adult criminal justice system. Thanks to all those who nominated mothers, and congratulations to our winners!

Tracy McClard, of Jackson, Missouri, continues to work for change in Missouri after her son committed suicide in an adult prison at the age of 17. See her recent feature on KFVS TV at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxvOH8rASvc>.

Lois DeMott, of Michigan, has become a parent leader in Michigan to keep youth out of adult jails and prisons and get them the mental health services they need after her son's experiences in adult prison. Lois was nominated for the award by the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency, www.miccd.org. Read more about Lois in "[Voices](#)."

Sincilina Beckett, of New Haven, Connecticut, began lobbying for the special needs of her son and coordinating his services and has been involved with several advocacy organizations in her area ever since.

Giana Livingston, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, helps mobilize parents and community members to attend meetings and rallies to share information, learn, and advocate for juvenile justice reform. Both Sincilina and Giana were nominated for the award by the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, www.ctjja.org.

Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children (FFLIC) was honored by NJJN and CFYJ with the National Organization of Distinction Award. FFLIC is the only juvenile justice reform advocacy organization in the country made of families, by families, and for families. FFLIC successfully closed the infamous Tallulah youth prison in 2006. www.ffmpeg.org

For press clips from award ceremonies, check the recent Weekly News Roundups or contact kfigiel@cfyj.org.

Dwayne Betts, Spokesman Extraordinaire

Congratulations to CFYJ Spokesman Dwayne Betts, who received his bachelor's degree in English from the University of Maryland, College Park this month. Dwayne was given the honor of addressing his fellow graduates at commencement, where he told his story of being sentenced to 9 years in adult prison at age 16 and finding strength and healing through writing. Dwayne was also interviewed on *All Things Considered* on NPR this month.

Dwayne has already begun his master of fine arts degree at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina. His prison memoir, *A Question of Freedom*, is to be published in August, with a book of poetry, *Shahid Learns to Pray*, to follow next year.

Listen to Dwayne on NPR at:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104385217>

Read the article in *The Baltimore Sun* at:

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/education/bal-md.betts21may21,0,5715583.story> and in the *Washington Post* at:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/21/AR2009052104732.html>

Watch Dwayne on Fox News at:

http://www.myfoxdc.com/dpp/news/maryland/052109_ex_con_earns_degree



Listen to *Juvenile Justice Matters*

Listed below is the lineup of this month's episodes of *Juvenile Justice Matters*, the CFYJ weekly radio show addressing the issue of juvenile transfer to adult court through the testimony of academics, advocates, and youth and families. The show is hosted weekly at 4:30 EDT on Thursdays through Blog Talk Radio at www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters. Don't forget to call in with questions to

347.843.4360.

May 7 - An interview with James Bell of the W. Haywood Burns Institute. Mr. Bell joined CFYJ on May 5 for a Congressional briefing on how juvenile transfer laws disparately impact African-American youth.

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters/2009/05/07/Racial-Disparities-in-the-Juvenile-Justice-System-A-discussion-with-James-Bell>

May 14 - Learn about the [Juvenile Justice Sabbath](#), a project to unite faith communities in supporting incarcerated children and children who have been the victims of crime. We speak with Javier Stauring, Policy Director for Faith Communities for Families and Children.

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters/2009/05/14/Javier-Stauring-discusses-the-upcoming-Juvenile-Justice-Sabbath-and-more>

May 21 - We discuss the release of CFYJ's new report, *America's Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice*, which finds that Latino youth are treated more harshly by the justice system than white youth at all stages in the justice system.

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters/2009/05/21/-Americas-Invisible-Children-Latino-Youth-and-the-Failure-of-Justice>.

May 28 - We talk with Dr. Barry Krisberg of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) about recent studies on juvenile justice reform and his perspectives gained from his extensive experience in the field.

www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters

GET ORGANIZED

A Monthly Column by Grace Bauer

We Lost Another Boy Today

We lost another boy today. He isn't dead, but he is yet another youth CFYJ knows who has fallen prey

to this country's system of mass incarceration. He was a bright young man who made a bad decision and was tried as an adult; he served his time in the scarring and unforgiving adult justice system. Now, an unfortunate but predictable destiny of recidivism and reincarceration has befallen this young man. I firmly believe (and the research corroborates the probability) that this never would have happened if only our society had handled this young man's indiscretions in juvenile court. There, he would have received help and hope instead of helplessness and hopelessness. Our youth make wrong choices sometimes, as this young man did, but that doesn't mean they need to have their lives thrown away by placing them without developmentally appropriate support in adult facilities. Along with 2.4 million others, this young friend of CFYJ has become a statistic.

Maybe you say to yourself at this point, "What's one more?" Maybe you think "He deserves what he gets," to allow yourself not to think about the fact that he is indeed lost and he is only 18. I know very well that feeling when you can't understand why, yet it brings a sense of helplessness and hopelessness that you can't bear, so you assign blame or whatever mechanism you choose and stay away from the real issue: he is lost.

A friend came to me this afternoon and said, "How do you keep fighting and doing this work when this happens?" I fumbled for some logic or reason and found after all these years as an advocate, for children involved or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile or criminal justice systems, I truly believe in the work I do. I believe we have a system designed to exploit and destroy children of color and poor kids. However, I do not believe that every person working within these systems has the idea that the work they devote their lives to means to do harm to our children. Yet, it happens every single day to thousands of children. So, why is it both of these statements can be the absolute truth?

In order for us to understand where we are today, we must recognize the past of the juvenile and justice systems of this country. According to the recent publication, *Adoration of the Question, Reflections on the Failure to Reduce Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System*, by the W. Haywood Burns Institute, one of this country's foremost experts on racial and ethnic disparities, "It [racial and ethnic inequity] was institutionalized within the earliest penal system so profoundly that it continues to influence which youth are valued and which are neglected." The publication goes on to show us the racist policies in action. "When the nation's first youth detention facility, the New York House of Refuge, established a 'colored' section in 1834, the exclusion of black children from rehabilitation services was rationalized as a waste of resources and a debasement of whites."

The question is now being asked by jurisdictions strapped for cash whether we can undo what we have spent decades building, and the answer is a resounding "YES!" We can use pieces of legislation like the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act (JJDP) reauthorization to make the long overdue changes to a failing and ineffective juvenile justice system. We can work to ensure something like Senator Webb's National Criminal Justice Act of 2009 is passed and executed by evidence-based standards and science rather than rhetoric, media hype, and racism. We can stop allowing ourselves to turn away from any of the 2.4 million that have become invisible to us. We can stop ignoring the facts and research that tell us the imprisonment of 2.4 million people is not increasing public safety but instead eroding our communities and destroying lives that could be saved more effectively and efficiently by prevention and treatment.

Individually each of us can ask the hard questions to others in our communities, particularly the leadership of our communities. When a vote comes up in your community to increase taxes to build

more prison beds, ask the leaders how many incarcerated people are in the beds they have now for non-violent offenses, especially those offenses pertaining to drug addiction. Then you might want to ask how many treatment slots and beds are available. The next time your government representative is voting for yet another mandatory minimum, ask him or her how many people are doing mandatory sentences when treatment could have served the same purpose of stopping the illegal activity. And, one last thing, are the resources divided up equally in the community where you live? If they are, you live in a rare community. Do something about it! Talk to the leaders about the disparities in resources in your communities. Don't know how to start a conversation like this? Give us a call at the Campaign for Youth Justice, and let us lend you our expertise in organizing for equity across all boundaries of race and class. Change is possible, but it can't happen if we don't begin to ask the hard questions of why such disparity continues to exist and destroy lives and communities.

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VOICES

Lois DeMott, one of the National Mother of Distinction Award honorees, is the mother of Kevin DeMott, a youth who was incarcerated in the adult justice system for nearly two years. At the press conference at the capitol in Lansing, Michigan, on May 6, when she was presented with her award, Lois told her story.

Kevin's journey has been long and very difficult-

At the age of around 3 it became apparent he had increasing unexplained rages, also recognized by our pediatrician. We began seeking private help for him, for us. His disorders became more severe around the age of 11. He had extreme highs and lows and unusual sleep patterns. He was not able to function in the school setting; he had been living out of our home; he was hurting himself and had a psychiatric stay. Yet he was denied services from Community Mental Health in our county, [who stated] he was not severe enough. We were told you often had to get your child in the court system to get the help they need. We took the advice and resorted to calling the police.

He was placed in the juvenile home for extended periods of time. There he didn't get medications as prescribed and was in seclusion for ten days at a time, which is a violation of our state's codes, among other many violations found. He was not the only child in these circumstances. Kevin only became enmeshed in the legal system, where he was sent to out of state placements for so-called treatment. After committing a crime while manic and off his medications at the age of 13, he was given a blended sentence, meaning he had to complete a program successfully or he would be sentenced as an adult. Again he was sent out of state to a facility that was to offer treatment, yet they had no psychologists or therapists on staff. After being brought back to Michigan and another rage in the juvenile home, he was sentenced on to prison at the age of 15 years old.

A child with a significant known mental illness should not be sent to adult prison, when the adult prison

system does not have mental health services available for the youth. I advocated very quietly in the background, and was fearful of retaliation in this prison system. I left Kevin to fend for himself much of the time, not knowing what to do.

Until Aug. 6, 2008. This was a life-changing day for me and Kevin. I attended a rally in Lansing. I met and heard the story from the mother of Timothy Souders, a mentally ill prisoner who died while strapped down to a cement slab, at the hands of 35 MDOC employees on August 6, 2006. I met another mother, Diana Childers, who boldly spoke out, stating that not advocating out of fear of retaliation was the worst thing we could do for our loved one. I met American Friends, a prisoner advocacy organization who works tirelessly on behalf of prisoners. I knew I had to begin to advocate for my son. I was made aware of my parental rights. I attended Kevin's treatment team meetings within the prison, taking advocates with me to get him better care and treatment. I wrote complaints and grievances to get him simple things and significant things like 1 hour out of cell for exercise out of 23 hours spent in-cell, improper restraint and medication use stopped, and to get his medications on a daily basis among many other things. I saw if I did not advocate for my son's rights and for humane treatment that he could be the next Timothy Souders, or he may never make it out of this system that is not set up to care for the mentally ill, let alone a juvenile.

Citizens need to know how the mentally ill who become incarcerated are being treated in our State. They are not being rehabilitated. Most of them will be released one day. Doesn't it make sense to help them prepare for their release back into society rather than lock them up in a cell for 21-23 hours a day? Doesn't finding some work they can do to become productive help all of us? I attended forums and I understand that officials of MDOC are calling for change. It must be implemented within the prison walls at each prison, and this is what is not occurring.

Many prisoners are left to fend for themselves as their families have given up, or they do not have the knowledge or financial resources to help their loved one. Because of this, there is significantly more inhumane treatment of those with mental illness than the general population. Even officers stated to us at visits that these prisoners spend far too much time locked in their cells, and this is a majority of the problem.

Keeping a mentally ill person in an 8 x 11 cell 21-23 hours a day is not rehabilitation. Not providing educational opportunities, work opportunities, or proper therapy should be unacceptable. Restraining an individual for days or weeks on end is simply inhumane, and yet it goes on still inside this system.

Today, Kevin and I have a plea for help for one incarcerated juvenile age 15, with significant mental illness, and with a mentality of a 6-8 year old child. He was wrongly incarcerated in this system. We need an appeal attorney for this boy. Please contact [

thedouger@chartermi.net] if you can help. He has spent most of his time in prison in solitary confinement; he has been abused and is not getting proper care or treatment for his illness.

I have two dreams or goals I want to see implemented:

1. Accountability within these systems- This can only be obtained by allowing outside organizations in freely, into juvenile homes to work with parents and children, to be certain CMHs are providing appropriate care, to allow advocates into jails and prisons.

This is the only way we will see true change occur and have accountability. It must be done through organizations who do NOT receive State or MDOC funding, or by state employees alone.

2. Forums need to be held on county levels- Education on mental illness and stories such as ours need to be presented to juvenile home and jail employees, police, EMTs, probation/parole supervisors, prosecutors and judges. Professionals who work with the mentally ill need proper training and need to learn about mental illness.

To all mothers who have a son or daughter in the juvenile system or incarcerated- my heart goes out to you- I know the pain and heartache you carry this Mother's Day. My wish for you is the courage and strength to stand up in these systems, to advocate for your loved one, and to never, never give up hope for them.

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NATIONAL MOMENTUM

Congressional Briefing on Latino Youth in the Juvenile and Adult Criminal Justice Systems

On May 20th, 2009, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and the Campaign for Youth Justice sponsored a Congressional briefing on issues facing Latino youth in the juvenile justice and adult criminal justice system featuring a panel of experts.

The briefing was co-sponsored by the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and more than 50 individuals attended the briefing, including over a dozen key staff from Congressional offices.

Eddie Ferrer, CFYJ's Board Chair, kicked off the briefing and introduced Janet Murguía, NCLR President, who gave introductory remarks. Raquel Mariscal, Senior Consultant, Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Site Support, Annie E. Casey Foundation, moderated the panel of speakers, who included Dr. Juan Sánchez, Executive Director, Southwest Key Program; Marcia Rincon-Gallardo, Disproportionate Minority Contact/Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Coordinator, Pima County Juvenile Court Center; Francisco "Chico" Villarruel, Acting Director, Julián Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University; Orlando Martinez, Founder and Senior Partner, Martinez Tjaden, LLP; and Elias Elizondo, an activist and a youth tried as an adult at age 16 and sentenced to life with parole.

"I was never afforded the opportunity to be tried as a juvenile and to experience the benefits that may have been afforded to me," stated Elizondo.

At the event, NCLR and CFYJ released a new report, *America's Invisible Children: Latino Youth and the Failure of Justice*, examining Latinos in the American juvenile justice and adult criminal justice systems. The brief provides examples of promising solutions and policy recommendations to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

"We know what works. What we need is the political will, the leadership, and the courage, for our policy-makers and advocacy community in this country to translate what works and make that part of the general practice," said Juan Sanchez.

Latinos are currently the largest minority population in the U.S., and on any given day, more than 18,000 Latino youth are incarcerated in America. Recent studies show that the rate at which Latino youth populate the criminal justice system far outpaces their general growth rate in U.S. society. Nearly one-quarter of incarcerated Latino youth are held in either state or federal adult jails or prisons. These statistics are sobering, but they may not even represent the full extent of Latino youth's contact with the juvenile justice system. For example, in many parts of the country, Latino youth are counted as either "white" or "black," which results in significant underdocumentation of the experience of Latino youth in the court systems.

A fact sheet with the key points from the report is available at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.com/documents/KeyFactsaboutLatinoYouth.doc>.

The full report, including recommendations for reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, is available at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.com/documents/LatinoPolicyBrief.pdf>.

Congressional Briefing on African-American Youth in the Juvenile and Adult Criminal Justice Systems

On May 5th, 2009, the Center for Children's Law and Policy, the W. Haywood Burns Institute, the NAACP, and the Campaign for Youth Justice held a Congressional briefing on the status of African-American youth in the juvenile justice and adult criminal justice systems.

The briefing was co-sponsored by Representatives Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA), Yvette D. Clarke (D-NY), Donald M. Payne (D-NJ), and Danny K. Davis (D-IL). Representatives Scott and Clarke joined the briefing and shared their perspectives on reducing disparities. Key staff from fifteen Congressional offices attended the briefing.

The briefing consisted of a panel of national experts on African-American youth in the juvenile justice and adult criminal justice systems and affected youth, including Lisa Garry of the Center for Children's Law and Policy; James Bell of the W. Haywood Burns Institute; Hilary Shelton of NAACP's Washington, D.C. Bureau; Poet and Activist Reginald Dwayne Betts, who was formerly incarcerated at age 16; and Neelum Arya of the Campaign for Youth Justice.

The event focused on the current status of African-American youth in the juvenile justice and adult criminal justice system as well as highlighting promising approaches to reducing racial disparities. The briefing was held in light of a report released by the Campaign entitled *Critical Condition: African-American Youth in the Justice System*, which examines newly available data and highlights the serious issue that black youth continue to be overrepresented at most stages in the justice system, receiving harsher treatment

than white youth. Disparities start when a decision is made to arrest a child - African-American youth make up 30% of those arrested while they represent only 17% of the overall youth population - and continue to the other extreme end of the system, where African-American youth are 62% of the youth prosecuted in the adult criminal system and are nine times more likely than white youth to receive an adult prison sentence.

A fact sheet with the key points from the report is available at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.com/documents/AABriefFactsheet.pdf>.

The full report, including recommendations for reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, is available at:

<http://campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/AfricanAmericanBrief.pdf>.

More information on these issues is available through the following links:

The Burns Institute report *Adoration of the Question: Reflections on the Failure to Reduce Racial & Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System*:

http://www.burnsinstitute.org/downloads/BI%20Adoration%20of%20the%20Question_2.pdf

The Center for Children's Law and Policy's Disproportionate Minority Contact Action Network project:

http://www.cclp.org/simple.php/dmc_action_network.

National Council on Crime and Delinquency, March 2009 report, *Created Equal: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the U.S. Criminal Justice System*: [http://www.nccd-](http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pdf/CreatedEqualReport2009.pdf)

<http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pdf/CreatedEqualReport2009.pdf>

Faith Communities Celebrate the Juvenile Justice Sabbath

On May 22-24, 2009, approximately 200 faith-based organizations participated in the Juvenile Justice Sabbath, a national event engaging faith-based groups, through various talks and awareness events, to make a unified call for action and draw attention to the plight of children who have been victims of violent crime as well as incarcerated children.

Javier Stauring of Faith Communities for Families and Children (FCFC) in Los Angeles, the sponsor organization of the Sabbath, wrote in a message to these groups, "United through our prayers, service, and actions we will continue to transform the juvenile justice system from a system that too often perpetuates wounds to one that promotes healing for our youth."

The Juvenile Justice Sabbath website contains prayers, suggested activities, and fact sheets at:

http://www.fcfla.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=47&Itemid=89.

A short documentary created in honor of the weekend, entitled *God Cries When We Sentence Youth to Die in Prison*, includes interviews with 5 religious leaders who look at the issue of trying children as adults, viewed through the lens of their various faith traditions.

View it at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgjLY97LStM>.

Download "A Dozen Things You Can Do" at:

http://www.fcfcla.org/images/pdf_files/dozen_things_you_can_do.pdf.

Faith Communities for Families and Children (FCFC) is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, economically diverse coalition of faith based organizations that provide support for and advocate on behalf of children and families involved in Los Angeles County and California's juvenile justice system.

<http://www.fcfcla.org/index.php>.

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ON THE CALENDAR

June 17 - JDCY "Blue Party" Fundraiser Event

Justice for DC Youth (JDCY), CFYJ's DC partner, is a non-profit organization that advocates for a fairer and more effective juvenile justice system in the District of Columbia. JDCY is hosting its annual community fundraising event on Wednesday, June 17th, 2009 from 6 - 9 p.m. at the Hamiltonian Gallery located at 1353 U Street, NW in Washington, DC. This extraordinary evening will feature a reception, live music, performance art by local talent, and a silent auction. Don't miss this opportunity to support an organization that works for progressive social change and the empowerment of our young people!

For more information about this event, including ticket prices and sponsorship levels, please contact kenny@jdcy.org or call 202.386.7104.

Join us for "Justice Summer!"

The Campaign for Youth Justice and our allies are launching "Justice Summer" starting in June, and we hope you can participate!

Throughout "Justice Summer" we'll be hosting events and activities to garner support for juvenile justice reform efforts throughout the country focusing on reducing the transfer of youth to adult court and ending the placement of youth in adult jails and prisons!

Mark your calendar!

The first national "Justice Summer" event will be a National "Call - in for Youth" Day on Wednesday, June 17th.

Look for details in an upcoming "special edition" newsletter from CFYJ!

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GET IN THE ACTION WITH CFYJ

Follow us on [Twitter](#).

Send your story of a youth tried as an adult or refer a friend to participate in CFYJ's [Case Profiles Project](#).

Support [reauthorization](#) of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act by writing to your Senator or Representative.

Contact Congressman John Larson (CT-01) at (202) 225-2265 and ask him to co-sponsor H.R. 1873, the [Juvenile Justice Improvement Act](#), if you are a constituent of his.

Encourage your Senator or Representative to support the [Youth PROMISE Act](#).

Listen to [Juvenile Justice Matters](#) radio show.

Call in to the show with questions at (347) 843-4360.

Join the Campaign for Youth Justice group on Facebook and connect with hundreds of advocates across the country at:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=22937084155&ref=ts>.

Visit the Campaign's YouTube channel at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/jjreform>.

Read *JJ Today*, Youth Today's blog on juvenile justice at:

www.youthtoday.org/jjtoday.

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