

CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

June 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

VA Crime Commission Holds Hearing to Discuss Youth Transfer

In the midst of a year-long study on Virginia's practice of trying and sentencing youth in adult court, the Virginia State Crime Commission met on June 25 in Richmond to hear testimony on the practice of prosecutorial discretion in transferring youth as young as 14 to adult court. The current law in the Commonwealth of Virginia allows primarily prosecutors to determine which youth end up in adult court and permits the incarceration of youth in adult jails and prisons.

Dr. Vincent P. Culotta, an expert in adolescent brain development, explained at the meeting how teen brains are different from those of adults and why that means teens should be kept out of the adult criminal system. Until a person reaches his or her mid-20s, there is continuing development in the part of the brain responsible for understanding consequences and making good decisions. Immature teen brains result in a more reactionary, less reasoned perception of situations than adults have. Dr. Culotta went on to state that the findings suggest that it is appropriate for youth to be given mitigated criminal culpability, a separate system of justice, and less severe punishments than adults. He asked that the scientific community be included in policy-making discussions and that policymakers consider brain development research when making decisions about transfer to adult court.

About three dozen family members and advocates came to show their concern about youth being sent to the adult system. Thanks to everyone who came!

Advocates hope that the information provided at the hearing and by the study will prompt the legislators on the Commission to recommend reform. They believe change is needed because the current system inappropriately limits Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court judges' role in deciding which youth are and are not tried as adults.

Andrew Block, Legal Director of the Just Children Program at Legal Aid Justice Center in Charlottesville said, "When legislators created our current system they all but removed the Juvenile Court judges from the equation. Now, most of the decisions about who gets tried as adults are made by prosecutors and lack judicial oversight, guiding standards, and any kind of appellate scrutiny. As a result, there is an uneven and unfair playing field, and worse, many kids who would be much better served in the juvenile system are being treated as adults."

Liane Rozzell, the parent of a youth who was confined in the juvenile system, and the founder and Executive Director of Families & Allies for Virginia's Youth, a grassroots advocacy organization, said, "I have seen the impact an adult record has on the youth and families I work with. These kids have trouble finding jobs, finishing their education, and can lose the right to

vote - all for something they may have done at age 14."

In December, the Crime Commission will make its decisions about what changes (if any) it will recommend to the General Assembly. The Commission will hear public comment before making a decision. Save the date of Tuesday, December 15 for an even more crucial Virginia Crime Commission meeting!

National Report Praises Connecticut's Improved Juvenile Justice System

Connecticut's progress in juvenile justice reform over the past few years makes it a national model, according to a national report released on June 10 by the National Juvenile Justice Network and the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CFYJ's Connecticut partner). The report, *Turning It Around: Successes and Opportunities in Juvenile Justice*, reviews reforms since 1993, when advocates sued the state over unsafe conditions of confinement--including children being denied medical care and education and being locked in cells for days with no opportunity to use a toilet.

As prevention and early intervention policies have paid off, Connecticut's juvenile court caseloads have shrunk by a third in the past four years. "Connecticut has shifted from merely containing youth to addressing the issues that led them to get into trouble," said Sarah Bryer, Director of the National Juvenile Justice Network. "The state now recognizes that most children can be helped in their own communities rather than in expensive residential facilities. That's better for youth and certainly better for taxpayers."

Despite its emphasis on successes, the report did not fail to mention that Connecticut is considering deferring the Raise the Age reforms legislated in 2007. The report says, "This would not only constitute a break in faith with the state's youth. It would also be counterproductive to a state trying to revive its economy and limit its expenses." The current Appropriations plan would return 16-year-olds to juvenile court in 2010, in partial compliance with the Raise the Age initiative.

"There is capacity in the system to serve 16-year-olds," said Anderson. "The juvenile system is better at rehabilitating youth, and they are safer there. It's a common sense move that will benefit kids and taxpayers."

Several themes emerge from the in-depth review:

- Services are effective when provided early and in the least restrictive setting.
- Evidence-based practice (programming validated by research) works better.

- Youth are best served when state agencies collaborate.
- Much of the progress in the juvenile justice system is linked to the decriminalization of "status offenses," such as running away and truancy. Family Support Centers have diverted these youth from court; however, most families don't have access to these centers. The Appropriations Committee budget includes additional centers.

"The report shows we're on the right path," said Abby Anderson, Executive Director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA). "Now we must continue on that path."

Full copies of the report are available on the CTJJA website at: www.ctjja.org.

Read local news coverage of the report at:

<http://www.thehour.com/story/470680>.

North Carolina Report Card: Youth Not Receiving Support

North Carolina's system of supportive services and services for at-risk adolescents is fragmented, and many young people are not receiving the help they need. That is one of the key findings of Action for Children North Carolina's first-ever *Youth Delinquency Prevention Report Card*, released on June 25.

The 2009 *Youth Delinquency Prevention Report Card* examines the most-recently available statewide data on adolescents -- those with healthy development, those who are at risk and those who are already involved in the criminal justice system.

"We have found that the large majority of youth are positively engaged in their communities and make successful transitions to adulthood. Unfortunately, those who are at risk are not having their special needs met by programs in North Carolina," says Barbara Bradley, President and CEO of Action for Children North Carolina. "As North Carolina continues to prosecute 16- and 17-year-olds as adults, some youth whose needs have not been met are sent to the adult criminal justice system, which does not provide assessment or treatment for them."

Other key findings include:

- It appears that most adolescents in the juvenile justice system enter with special needs that are not being successfully addressed by the state's human services and education systems. The juvenile justice system may be the first place at-risk children's needs are identified and treated.
- The overall juvenile crime rate has been steadily declining for years, and the vast majority

- of crimes committed by youth in both the juvenile and adult systems are nonviolent.
- Youth of color are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system. More data analysis is needed to understand why.
 - More youth in North Carolina are processed in the adult criminal justice system than in the juvenile system.

To download a full version of Action for Children North Carolina's 2009 *Youth Delinquency Prevention Report Card*, go to:

<http://www.ncchild.org/action/images/stories/PDFs/2009%20Youth%20Delinquency%20Prevention%20Report%20Card%20Final.pdf>.

A Message from the Youth Justice Coalition in Los Angeles

Dear Youth Supporters and Advocates:

We are the Youth Justice Coalition/FREE LA High School, a group of youth from Los Angeles who use leadership as a way to empower and educate ourselves and our communities. All of us have gone through the struggle of living in low income communities believing that we would never graduate high school, but here we are today asking for your help in making our PROM possible!

As a demonstration and an extension of our work - last year we started our own school. WOW! It is F.R.E.E. LA High School - Fight for the Revolution that will Empower and Educate Los Angeles - where "Street Knowledge can get you to College"! We now serve 80 youth who have been pushed out of other schools and have joined us to gain the necessary support to achieve their High School Diploma.

We need your Superhero support in making our dream of having prom possible! Many students want to go but do not have money for dresses/suits and transportation for July 17th (our Prom Night). We are asking for Formal dresses, tuxedos, and suits for our students. We are also asking for "Limousine sponsorships" or monetary donations for limousines. Most of our fellow students have never been inside a limousine, and we would like to provide safe passage to and from the prom location. Almost all of our students have never experienced an event like this, and we ask that you help make this a night to remember for them!!

All contributions are tax deductible.

Thank you!

In solidarity,

Cynthia, Marilyn, Jorge, Maritza, Gaby and Suzy
Prom Committee, FREE LA HS / Youth Justice Coalition

For more information, contact the Youth Justice Coalition at freelanow@yahoo.com or call 323-235-4243. Mail us at: PO Box 73688, Los Angeles, CA 90003

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FROM THE HILL

Senator Feinstein "Hotlines" the Gang Abatement and Prevention Act of 2009

Last week, Senator Feinstein (D-CA) used a Senate procedure called a "hotline" to speed up consideration of S. 132, the Gang Abatement and Prevention Act of 2009, in the U.S. Senate. Under hotline procedures, a Senator can request that the other members of the Senate agree to allow a piece of legislation to be approved by the Senate without a debate on the bill and without adding any amendments.

Like the Youth PROMISE Act, S. 132 deals with the issue of gangs; however, S. 132 is problematic as it includes punishment and incarceration rather than prevention and early intervention. It will undoubtedly lead to increases in racial and ethnic disparities, increased incarceration, and more severe sanctions such as life sentences without the opportunity for parole (since the federal criminal justice system does not allow for parole) for youth of color in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Fortunately, S. 132 is currently being held up in the Senate by several Senators who have stopped the "hotline" process by placing "holds" on the bill, meaning they do not want the bill to come to the floor without debate.

Action Item: Call your Senator today to voice your concerns about S. 132, the Gang Abatement and Prevention Act! To find your Senator's contact information, visit www.senate.gov and use the "Find Your Senators" tool in the upper right hand corner of the site.

When you call or e-mail, tell your Senator you are concerned because:

~S. 132 continues to emphasize tougher penalties, which are costly, disproportionately affect youth of color, and result in longer expensive prison sentences, instead of focusing on prevention and intervention programs, which are less expensive and have been shown to work and are being

increasingly implemented nationally.

~S. 132 takes the control to address crime away from communities and localities - who are best equipped to build sustainable, effective solutions to gang involvement - and instead places it in the hands of the federal government.

Youth PROMISE Act Reaches 200+ Co-Sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives

The Youth PROMISE Act is gaining momentum in the House with over 200 bipartisan 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: Support the Youth PROMISE Act by:

~Calling or writing a letter to your Senators to co-sponsor and support S. 435. To find your Senator's contact information, visit www.senate.gov and use the "Find Your Senators" tool in the upper right hand corner of the site.

~Calling or writing a letter to your Representative to co-sponsor and support H.R. 1064 - To find the name and contact information of your Representative, visit www.house.gov and type your zip code into the "Find Your Representative" tool at the top right corner of the page; or

~Signing your organization on as a supporter of the bill - To sign on, contact Tara Andrews at Andrews@juvjustice.org.

Senate Judiciary Subcommittee Holds Hearing on National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2009

On Thursday, June 11, 2009, the Senate Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Drugs held a hearing on "Exploring the National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2009."

The witnesses included Senator Jim Webb (D-VA); Chief William Bratton, Los Angeles Police

Department; Pat Nolan, Vice President of Prison Fellowship; Professor Charles J. Ogletree, Harvard Law School; and Brian W. Walsh, Senior Legal Research Fellow, Center for Legal and Judicial Studies at the Heritage Foundation.

The National Criminal Justice Commission Act of 2009, S. 174, would establish a Commission of individuals to review the U.S. criminal justice system, make findings, and create a report for the President and Congress on ways to reform the system, including examining public safety, cost-effectiveness, prison administration, and fairness. The bill also requires specific findings to be made on certain aspects of the criminal justice system, including reducing the incarceration rate, the treatment of drug offenders, and the prevalence of mental illness.

To view the hearing, please visit: <http://judiciary.senate.gov/hearings/hearing.cfm?id=3906> and click on the blue "webcast" button.

To view a summary of the bill or to check the current status of the legislation, please visit: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

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RESEARCH & POLICY

National Prison Rape Elimination Commission Recommends Youth Protections

The National Prison Rape Elimination Commission (NPREC) reported on its investigation of the status of youth in adult jails and prisons as part of a nationwide examination of sexual assault in the juvenile and criminal justice systems on June 23. The commission's report concluded that youth incarcerated with adults are at highest risk for sexual abuse by other inmates when compared with the adult inmates around them. Developed six years after the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003, the report called for officials to identify those prisoners who are vulnerable and to protect them, to develop reporting and investigatory procedures for sexual abuse that keep victims safe, and to ensure immediate access to medical and mental health care for those abused.

The NPREC report found that youth in adult jails and prisons are at "extreme risk" of sexual victimization and that at a minimum they should be separated from adults. With some 10,000 youth in adult jails or prisons on any given day, one remedy the NPREC report cites is to "at a minimum" separate youth from adults. But the NPREC report also cites strong concerns that correctional administrators, in order to protect youth, might place youth in isolation or in solitary confinement, which could be detrimental to youths' mental health. As an alternative, the

NPREC recommends instead that correctional administrators consider placing youth in facilities more suited to their needs, such as juvenile detention or juvenile correctional facilities.

In 1994, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that deliberate indifference to the substantial risk of sexual abuse violates an incarcerated individual's rights under the Eighth Amendment. The Court stated that sexual abuse "is not part of the penalty that criminal offenders pay for their offenses against society." Given that the report found that "youth, small stature, and lack of experience in correctional facilities appear to increase the risk of sexual abuse by other prisoners," it is clear that young people transferred to the adult criminal system are under the most substantial risk of sexual abuse and that deliberate indifference to this fact constitutes a violation of their Eighth Amendment rights.

The report and standards can be found online here:

<http://nprec.us/publication/>.

Legal Victory Won in Connecticut!

The Connecticut Appellate Court decided that the discretionary transfer law, which allows prosecutors to send youth charged with certain felonies to the adult court, is unconstitutional! In *State of Connecticut v. David A. Fernandes, Jr.*, the Connecticut Appellate Court ruled that the discretionary transfer from juvenile court to adult court provision of the state's transfer statute requires that a juvenile receive a hearing in juvenile court and that the decision to transfer the child is made at the judge's discretion. The court found that the statute's discretionary transfer provision creates a liberty interest to remain in the juvenile justice system and that this liberty interest, once bestowed by statute, cannot be taken away without due process-in this case a court hearing and consideration of defense arguments by the transferring juvenile court judge. In Fernandes' case, the juvenile court refused to exercise its discretion (which it believed, incorrectly, it did not have under the statute) to consider the arguments made by his attorney. The Connecticut Appellate Court ruled that this was a denial of Fernandes' due process rights and reversed the judgment.

A copy of the ruling can be found at:

http://cfyj.org/documents/CT_DavidFernandes.pdf.

Legal Victory Won in Vermont!

Congratulations to Anna Saxman, Kerry DeWolfe, and Doug Willey on their important victory in

Vermont! In a case before a Vermont District Court judge, they were able to have Jonas Dixon treated as a Youthful Offender for his offense rather than tried in District Court as an adult. The District Court judge thoroughly explored the treatment and behavior of Dixon following his offense-the shooting of a man having sex with Dixon's mother in the Dixons' trailer home. The judge noted the extensive therapy Dixon has undergone since the shooting and the significant progress he has made. Dixon was an immature and depressed teenager with a severely mentally-ill mother who behaved inappropriately. The court considers the effect this must have had on Dixon and finds that his subsequent progress in therapy and excellent school performance demonstrates that Dixon is not a danger to the public, that he is clearly amenable to rehabilitation, and that an adult prison placement would be inappropriate. The court also commented that Vermont's adult rehabilitation programs are not set up to meet the needs of a child like Dixon, and sending him to adult prison would likely only result in his victimization. All these considerations led the court to find that Dixon ought to be placed in a closely supervised Youthful Offender program.

A copy of the ruling can be found at:

http://cfyj.org/documents/VT_JonasDixon.pdf.

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NATIONAL MOMENTUM

Join the Movement!

CFYJ is excited to announce the upcoming launch of a new grassroots campaign called "Join the Movement"! To build momentum, the "Join the Movement" campaign will put grassroots organizing tools directly into the hands of youth, parents and families most directly affected by the punitive policies of trying, sentencing, and incarcerating youth in the adult justice system. The "Join the Movement" campaign will provide "Take Action" packets with new, exciting ideas for organizing; creative new outreach materials including an educational DVD, stickers, buttons, bracelets, and other fun stuff; and web-based tools and tips for activating, motivating, and engaging others!

Join us on Thursday, August 6th, 2009 for the national launch of the "Join the Movement" campaign from 6:30-8:30 pm at the Public Welfare Foundation located at 1200 U Street, NW, Washington, DC.

The event will feature:

- Ways you can get involved!

- A preview of the new *Childhood Interrupted* film!
- Take action kits with buttons, bracelets & more!
- Prizes, snacks & refreshments!
- The release of *A Question of Freedom*, a new book authored by R. Dwayne Betts about his experience in the criminal justice system.

At the age of sixteen, R. Dwayne Betts carjacked a man with a friend. He had never held a gun before, but within a matter of minutes he had committed six felonies. A bright young kid, he served his eight-year sentence as part of the adult population in some of the worst prisons in Virginia.

A Question of Freedom is a coming-of-age story with the unique twist that it takes place in prison. Utterly alone-and with the growing realization that he really is not going home any time soon-Dwayne confronts profound questions about violence, freedom, crime, race, and the justice system. Above all, *A Question of Freedom* is about a quest for identity-one that guarantees Dwayne's survival in a hostile environment that incorporates an understanding of how his own past led to the moment of his crime.

Stay tuned for information about book signing events near you!

To attend the "Join the Movement" launch event, please RSVP to Shantá Gray at: sgray@cfyj.org.

Learn more about Dwayne's story and his new book at:
www.rdwaynebetts.com.

Request for Client Stories for JLWOP Amicus Briefs

The National Juvenile Defender Center (NJDC) is requesting client stories for inclusion in two amicus briefs to be filed in the JLWOP cases pending before the U.S. Supreme Court, Sullivan & Graham. The timeline is very tight, and the NJDC would like to hear as soon as possible:

First, NJDC is gathering compelling success stories about youth who remained in the juvenile justice system despite being charged with very serious crimes and whose lives were turned around because they were given a chance to benefit from the services of the juvenile system. Please contact Ji Seon Song by July 3, 2009 if you have any such stories to share. She can be reached at: jsong@njdc.info or by phone at: (202) 452-0010 x106.

Second, David DeBruin of Jenner & Block is presenting the Court with a collection of life stories of individuals who committed very serious offenses as juveniles and were transferred to adult

criminal court but later made significant contributions as artists, doctors, scientists, judges, athletes, entertainers, ministers, or what have you. The point of this brief would be to personalize the argument with real-life stories of individuals who were able to rehabilitate themselves after committing offenses as juveniles and make meaningful and important contributions to society which would have been tragic to lose. Please contact David at: ddebruin@jenner.com or by phone at: (202) 639-6015 if you have any stories to share.

If you know of anyone who might fit either of these profiles and who is willing to tell their story to the Supreme Court through these amicus briefs - or even historical examples - please contact either Ji Seon or David as soon as possible. Again, time is of the essence as the deadline for the briefs is rapidly approaching.

Thank you!

U.S. Conference of Mayors Passes Pro-JJDPA Resolution

This month at their 77th annual meeting, in Providence, Rhode Island, the U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted a resolution in support of the JJDPA reauthorization. Special thanks to Brenda Russell of Mayor Bloomberg's office for spearheading the effort!

The resolution is pasted below:

Reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act:

Whereas, The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) of 1974 [42 U.S. C. 5601] provides the major source of federal funding to improve states' juvenile justice systems;

Whereas, the JJDP A has provided critical protection to our nation's youth through the Act's core protections, which include keeping youth out of adult jails except in very limited cases; keeping youth out of sight and sound contact with adults in those limited cases; the deinstitutionalization of status offenders such as runaways, truants and others whose behavior would not be criminal if committed by an adult; and the requirement that states address disproportionate minority contact with the juvenile justice system;

Whereas, the current authorization of the JJDP A is scheduled to be reauthorized in 2009; and

Whereas, the JJDP A has for over 30 years played a critical role in preventing youth involvement with the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems and in diverting youth

from further involvement in the juvenile justice system, contributing to youth delinquency being at near historic lows with a 30 percent drop in juvenile arrests from 1996 to 2007, according to the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; and

Whereas, according to the Department of Justice, violent crimes committed by youth account for only 17 percent of the total violent crime in America; and

Whereas, a 2007 study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and a 2008 study by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) found that transferring youth to the adult criminal justice system significantly increases future crime; and

Whereas, incarcerating a young person costs between \$32,000-\$65,000 per year, and operating just one bed over a twenty-year period can cost between \$1.25 million and \$1.5 million; and

Whereas, there are evidence-based alternatives to incarcerating youth that reduce crime and save money, yielding up to \$13 in cost savings for every dollar spent. Early interventions that prevent high-risk youth from engaging in repeat criminal offenses can save the public nearly \$5.7 million in costs over a lifetime; and

Whereas, in 1998, the Conference of Mayors passed a resolution requesting that Congress implement better funding methods through the States for addressing youth violence and juvenile justice issues; and

Whereas, in 2005, the Conference of Mayors encouraged its members to create programs to prevent and reduce violence by implementing parent education initiatives, family support programs, business programs, and faith-based organization enterprises; and

Whereas, also in 2007, the Conference of Mayors reiterated its call for better regulation of the sealing, expunging and releasing of juvenile records, particularly those associated with nonviolent crimes, so that young people affected have the maximum opportunity to become self-sufficient and successful adults; and

Whereas, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act is an essential tool toward not only helping our nation's youth but also preventing crime,

Now, therefore let it be resolved that the Conference of Mayors calls upon the U.S. Congress to reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act this year with specific increased authorization levels and spending flexibility for the Title II Grants,

and Title V Grants; and

Be it further resolved that the Conference of Mayors calls on other mayors and Congress to support evidence-based youth programs targeting system-involved as well as at-risk youth ages 14 to 25 through community-based outreach and services that link the community as a whole through a media campaign and community mobilization efforts; and

Be it further resolved that a reauthorization shall include adequate support and funding for programs supporting job training, education, employment, housing, substance abuse treatment, mental health services and recreation to help our youth realize their true potential.

Veterans Call for Support for OJJDP

At the American Legion's annual meeting in May, 2009 in Indianapolis, Indiana, the organization approved a resolution calling for more support for the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The resolution recognizes the vital role that OJJDP plays in working with states to remove youth from adult jails and lockups as well as other critical functions. Thanks to Marion Mattingly, Bob Caudell and Dennis Bolland of the American Legion, and American Legion members for their work on this important statement.

The resolution is pasted below:

Whereas, The National Commission on Children & Youth is vitally concerned about the violent crimes committed by juveniles in this nation each year; and

Whereas, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is organized:

- to develop and encourage the implementation of national standards for the administration of juvenile justice; to assist state and local governments in removing juveniles from jails and lockups for adults;
- to develop and implement effective methods of preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency, including methods with specific focus on maintaining and strengthening the family unit so that juveniles may be retained in their homes;
- to develop effective programs to prevent delinquency, to divert juveniles from traditional juvenile justice systems and to provide critically needed alternatives to

institutionalization; and

- to coordinate all federal juvenile delinquency programs and all federal programs related to missing and exploited children; and

Whereas, The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention program now promoted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has proved effective in many states; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, May 6-7, 2009, that the American Legion supports the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its programs; and, be it finally

Resolved, that the President and the Congress meet or exceed current funding levels for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

CFYJ Presents to Young Elected Officials Networks

On June 12, CFYJ's Roger Ghatt traveled to Atlanta, Georgia to give a presentation at the National Convening of People for the American Way's Young Elected Officials (YEO) Network. At a workshop entitled "Juvenile Justice and Mandatory Minimums," Roger presented to the young officials the case against youth transfer, gave tips on how to get involved in transfer reform, and offered CFYJ resources for support.

The Young Elected Officials Network's members are between the ages of 18 and 35 and hold congressional, gubernatorial, legislative, and city and county commission seats throughout the United States. The Network's members are considered the leaders of tomorrow, and CFYJ is excited to continue our collaboration and to work with them to change transfer policies.

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MEDIA WRAP

Dwayne Betts to Guest Blog

CFYJ Spokesman Dwayne Betts will be featured as a guest blogger for Ta-Nehisi Coates of *The Atlantic* for the week of June 29. He will discuss juvenile justice and other current issues.

Find the blog at the site below, and please share your comments!

<http://ta-nehisicoates.theatlantic.com/>



Experience *Juvenile Justice Matters*

Listed below is the lineup of this month's new 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.

June 18th: An interview with Lola Reyes, Asaeli Matelau, and Isaac Giron, who are core members of the FACE Movement, an advocacy group based in Salt Lake City, Utah. The FACE Movement has mobilized itself to improve the conditions of oppressed people within their community. The Movement is against adult trials, sentencing and incarceration for juveniles in Utah, where juveniles who are accused of certain crimes can be automatically tried as adults. The FACE Movement advocates for providing opportunities for juvenile offenders, rather than punitive sentencing in adult prisons and recently started a mentoring program.

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters/2009/06/18/Exclusive-Interview-with-The-FACE-Movement>

June 11th: An interview with Efrén Paredes, Jr., an inmate serving three life sentences for murder and armed robbery in a Michigan prison. Convicted at the age of 15, he never saw the inside of a juvenile court and has steadfastly maintained his innocence. Family, friends and followers are campaigning on his behalf in an effort to commute his sentence.

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters/2009/06/11/Exclusive-Interview-With-Efrn-Paredes-Jr-Live-From-Within-a-MI-Prison>

June 4th: An interview with Victor Saez and Sara Morris of the Youth Art & Self-Empowerment Project (YASP) of Philadelphia. Victor was introduced to weekly YASP workshops when he was incarcerated at the age of 14 in a Philadelphia adult jail. Sara Morris ran these workshops, and

now she and Victor co-coordinate YASP. They joined us to discuss empowerment workshops, leadership training and how providing opportunities to formerly incarcerated youth helped build a youth-led political movement.

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters/2009/06/04/Building-a-Movement-The-Youth-Art-Self-Empowerment-Project-in-Philadelphia-PA>

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GET ORGANIZED

A Monthly Column by Grace Bauer

Imagining Reform

The past few months have given me the privilege of being back out in the field organizing with families in Virginia, Missouri, Maryland and Washington, DC. I wish I could report that I found all families of incarcerated youth are doing well and we can all stop and take a much deserved vacation. Sadly, things are not much different for families and their children than they were. Some good things have been happening across the country, but we can do more if we as juvenile justice professionals and advocates make a point to ask families how they are doing and how they are faring in the juvenile justice system.

When we do, we just might see reform rise to a level of promise and practice that exceeds all we know today. Take a moment to step away from the hustle and email and imagine what that reform will look like.

Perhaps it will include ideas from people and organizations like:

The Community Conferencing Center (CCC): a conflict transformation and community justice organization that provides ways for people to safely, collectively and effectively prevent and resolve conflicts and crime.

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

The Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) in New Orleans, Louisiana. YEP provides intensive case management, mentoring and educational services to at-risk New Orleans youth, to strengthen each young person's capacity to successfully connect with his or her family and community and lay the foundation for a healthy transition to adulthood.

<http://www.youthempowermentproject.org/>

Reverend Rodney Hunter in Richmond, VA, who opened up his church (Wesley Memorial

Methodist Church) and put out the proverbial red carpet to organizers as we began organizing families and communities in Virginia.

Hopefully, our advocacy movement will also include undiscovered advocates in your community, people who care passionately about our children. If you know a parent or someone in your community in need of support, please share our information with him or her. At the Campaign for Youth Justice, we believe the best way to bring about change in the juvenile and criminal justice systems is to have the people most affected at the decision-making tables. Surely you know one person you could connect to us today!

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VOICES

Bobby, incarcerated in Missouri, gives his thoughts on harsh juvenile sentencing. The following contains excerpts of the original essay.

We Can't Just Throw Our Children Away

"All too rarely do I hear people asking just what it is that we've done to make so many children's hearts so hard, or what collectively we might do to right their moral compass- what values we must live by. Instead I see us doing what we've always done-pretending that these children are somehow not our own".

-Barack Obama (from *Dreams from My Father*)

Has society reached the point of callousness to where we discard our children without so much as giving them a chance to make it in life? Have we really dug below the surface to unearth the source of anger that causes our once innocent youth to behave so violently? In our search for retribution to punish these young men and women for their crimes we should not lose sight of the ultimate goal of rehabilitation.

...Our laws and statutes say that yes we have given up on rehabilitating our youth. In this country juveniles are sentenced to such disproportionate sentences... The United States is the only county in the world that has juveniles serving life without parole sentences. In essence such sentences by the states say that we don't believe that our youth can be rehabilitated. We have given up on our children.

...These are still our children and we must help instead of abandoning them. We have to begin to cure them and rescue them from their abyss of isolation and rebellion. ... We must work with our troubled youth to come up with solutions to the ailments that plague them and poison them to

the point where they engage in violent crime. The solution can never be found in abandoning them, which is what happens when we sentence them to die in prison. Such actions do not reflect the values of a maturing society. As a decent society we must help our youth pull themselves out of the hole.... We must not abandon them. No, we can't just throw our children away.

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ON THE CALENDAR

August 6, 6:30-8:30, Public Welfare Foundation, 1200 U St. NW, Washington, DC

Release of Dwayne Betts' Memoir, *A Question of Freedom*, and launch of CFYJ's "Join the Movement" campaign. Save the date for this event to celebrate the release of this memoir of learning, survival, and coming of age in an adult prison and the launch of CFYJ's Join the Movement Campaign. RSVP to: sgray@cfyj.org.

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WELCOME TO CFYJ!!

Collin Galster comes to CFYJ from Harvard University where he is currently an undergraduate studying political science. Collin is from St. Louis, Missouri, and he resides in Washington, D.C. while working for the Campaign. Collin does policy research and also helps analyze the campaign's database. Collin enjoys baseball and exploring the city.

Sonya Sackner-Bernstein joins us from New York City where she attends college at the University of Pennsylvania. Sonya's family moved to Washington, D.C. last summer, and she has been exploring the city every since. She enjoys reading and listening to music. Sonya is currently doing event planning for Justice for DC Youth and CFYJ as well as working on the national outreach program.

Larry Bailey is from Louisville, Colorado and attends Northwestern School of Law in Chicago. Here at CFYJ Larry is a legislative intern and is enjoying learning about how to change laws. Larry enjoys listening to music and playing sports; during his spare time he is in a band.

Julie Mayer joins the Campaign from Maryland. She attends Hobart and William Smith

University where she is working towards her bachelor's degree in public policy. While at the Campaign, Julie works on Media and Campaign relations. In her spare time Julie enjoys reading and blogging.

Kimberly Wathington is originally from New Jersey. She attends the University of Pennsylvania where she is finishing up her master's degree in public policy. Here at CFYJ Kimberly works with state and local organizations to get the JJDPa reauthorized. During Kimberly's spare time she enjoys reading, plays, concerts, movies, traveling, eating out, and shopping.

Justin Wiseman, originally from Potomac, Maryland, earned his bachelor's degree in international relations in 2005. He spent two years working at an international relations think tank and is now entering his third year of law school at Emory, where he has done work in public interest, including at the International Humanitarian Law Clinic, where he worked to defend Guantanamo detainees, and worked for the House Judiciary Committee last summer. He is at CFYJ this summer doing on legal research, and is excited to learn about the advocacy side of policy-making.

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GET IN THE ACTION WITH CFYJ

Comment on Dwayne Betts' latest [blog](#).

Follow CFYJ on [Twitter](#).

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

Contact your Senator to voice your concerns with [S.132](#).

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

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

Call in to the show with your 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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