

CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

February 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

CFYJ Seeks Stories of Youth Prosecuted as Adults

CFYJ's Case Profiles Project is gathering stories of youth who have been tried, sentenced, or incarcerated as adults. Through these case profiles, we hope to communicate to policymakers, the public and the media the experiences, perspectives, and concerns of those who are impacted by this issue. CFYJ will also use these stories to continue to highlight youth, parent, and family voices through reports, policy briefs, publications, newsletters, and the CFYJ website.

We need your help in collecting these stories. If you or someone you know of has been tried, sentenced, or incarcerated in the adult justice system as a child, please pass his or her contact information on to us (see below) or encourage him or her to write a profile with attention to the questions on the informational sheet provided below. Additionally, please forward this request to your personal contacts and networks. At this time, we are hoping to collect new case profiles by **March 31, 2009**.

For youth who have been held in adult jails, please address the following in one or two paragraphs:

1. Describe how your experience in an adult jail has affected you.
2. Tell us about a typical day in an adult jail. What kind of services (such as education, health care, recreation, and other programs) did you receive? How were you treated?
3. How has your future been affected by this experience?
4. If you could speak with members of Congress about laws that allow youth to be held in adult jails, what would you say?

For parents and family members of youth who have been held in adult jails, please address the following in one or two paragraphs:

1. Describe how having a child or family member under age 18 in an adult jail has affected you.
2. How has your child/family member's future been affected by this experience?
3. If you could speak with members of Congress about laws that allow youth to be held in adult jails, what would you say?

To see some sample profiles, visit the "Real Life" section on the CFYJ website at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/caseprofiles.html>.

To access the CFYJ Case Profiles Toolkit, which includes writing tips, sample profiles, and consent forms, visit:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/yourstory.html>.

Please pass this message along! Download an informational flyer here and post it or send it to your contacts.

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/caseprofilerecruiting.pdf>

Thank you so much for your participation in this project. To submit stories or for more information, please contact:

Kate Figiel
Campaign for Youth Justice
1012 14th Street NW, Suite 610
Washington DC 20005
Phone: 202.558.3580 x 29
Email: kfigiel@cfyj.org
<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org>

For more information on the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, please visit the Act 4 Juvenile Justice website:

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



Support Implementation of Connecticut's Raise the Age:Urgent Rally Monday, March 2

The Connecticut "Raise the Age" bill to end automatic transfer of 16- and 17-year-olds to the adult justice system passed in 2007, after almost 4 years of organizing. This legislation is one of the most significant recent advances in juvenile justice reform and will increase public safety by putting more youth back in the juvenile justice system where they belong--where there is better access to rehabilitation and which is proven to decrease repeat offending.

Now Raise the Age is facing delay as Governor Rell has cut budget funding for the bill. The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA) is organizing an emergency rally in Hartford to promote implementation of Raise the Age. Please share this announcement with your Connecticut contacts. Come show your support for implementing this important bill before the budget is finalized! We need you!

Monday, March 2, 2009

10:00 a.m.

Legislative Office Building

300 Capitol Ave.

Hartford, CT

CTJJA brought 300 people to the Capitol in 2007 to pass the legislation, and they are hoping to gather 500 this year. CTJJA will provide tee-shirts and lunch.

If you organize people to attend, CTJJA can help provide transportation! Contact Jacqueline at (203) 579-2727 or jacqueline@ctjja.org if you need assistance with group transportation.

The agenda for the day is as follows:

10:15 - Gather in the lobby of the Legislative Office building to show support

11:00 - Attend press conference

12:00 - Attend Judiciary Committee public hearing to show support and testify (optional)

View and print the flyer advertising the event at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/RaisetheAgeRally2009Flyer1.pdf>

View and RSVP to the Facebook event for the rally in Hartford at:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/event.php?eid=54248046089>.

Say YES Connecticut!

As part of the ongoing Connecticut campaign to implement the Raise the Age bill and support initiatives that

empower youth and foster public safety, the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA) has launched a new campaign website. The concept of the YES! Campaign is that "YES = YES: With Youth Empowered to Succeed, You Ensure Public Safety."

The YES! legislative agenda includes the following:

~Say YES! to healthy families. Continue to support the changes to Family With Service Needs policies and practices.

~Say YES! to better schools. Support initiatives to improve student engagement in school, citizenship and the school community, including truancy prevention and alternatives to unproductive discipline tactics like suspension.

~Say YES! to safe communities. Pass legislative changes to fully fund and implement Raise the Age.

Read more about the YES! Campaign at:

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

Do you want to say YES! to Connecticut's youth and help spread the word? Contact Jacqueline at the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance at 203-579-2727 or jacqueline@ctjja.org to join the effort.

For more about the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, visit:

www.ctjja.org.

Illinois Governor Signs Bill to End Automatic Prosecution of 17-Year-Olds

On February 10, Governor Quinn of Illinois signed legislation to end the automatic prosecution of 17-year-olds as adults charged with misdemeanors. The legislation takes effect on January 1, 2010. Congratulations to everyone who was involved in this effort!

"With this change in law, Illinois recognizes the importance of treating low-level juvenile offenders in juvenile court instead of condemning them to the adult system," stated Diane Geraghty, Director of the Loyola Civitas ChildLaw Center, lead entity for the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change initiative in Illinois. "This incremental approach makes sense and will improve public safety, save money, and save kids."

"High school juniors and seniors who happen to be 17 years old are not adults," said George W. Timberlake, retired chief judge of the 2nd Judicial Circuit. "In no other area of law do we allow them to have the rights of adults. We should not send them to an adult criminal system where their chances of committing more crimes are much higher."

The new law does not change the age of majority for felonies, but it does create a task force to examine issues surrounding raising adult jurisdiction for felonies from age 17 to age 18. The task force is expected to present a report by January 2010.

"To give teenagers a chance at education, jobs, and housing, we have to give them services at least until they graduate from high school," said Betsy Clarke, President of the Juvenile Justice Initiative. "We should not condemn them to a lifetime criminal record based on mistakes made as a youth."

The Campaign applauds the Illinois Juvenile Justice Initiative for their leadership on this effort and praises Illinois legislators for recognizing the benefits of keeping youth out of the adult criminal system. We congratulate all the advocates, communities and organizations who worked tirelessly to make this bill a success!

Read the press release from the Illinois Juvenile Justice Initiative at:

<http://www.jjustice.org/pdf/sb2275%20Press%20Release%20Feb%2010%2009.pdf>.

Review CFYJ's letter of support for the governor to sign the bill at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/Gov.QuinnLetter.pdf>

Read the news article in the Northwest Herald at:

http://www.nwherald.com/articles/2009/02/11/r_dz36szmwrupmtlk49dcug/index.xml.

Read the article in the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin at:

<http://www.suffredin.org/news/newsitem.asp?newsitemid=3564>.

Action for Children North Carolina Releases 2009 North Carolina Children's Index

Action for Children North Carolina has released its 2009 North Carolina Children's Index, a report offering a wealth of child and youth well-being data that demonstrate the state's public policy successes as well as missed opportunities. The Children's Index, which is published biennially, presents a comprehensive snapshot of how children are faring in North Carolina. The report monitors key indicators addressing seven issue areas: health, safety, economic security, early care, education, child maltreatment, and delinquency prevention.

The report highlighted juvenile justice as a major area where North Carolina has missed opportunities for successful policies, despite research proving that putting youth under 18 in the juvenile justice system is more developmentally appropriate and better enhances public safety. North Carolina is still one of only three states to treat 16- and 17-year-olds as adults in all aspects of their contact with the criminal system. In fact, more North Carolina youth were processed as adults than as juveniles in 2004.

Download the 2009 North Carolina Children's Index at:

http://www.ncchild.org/action/images/stories/2009%20Childrens%20Index/17198_09_Childrens_Index_06.pdf.

Read the AP news article on the release at:

http://www.news-record.com/content/2009/02/19/article/report_on_child_health_sees_successes_failures.

Learn more about Action for Children North Carolina at:

<http://www.ncchild.org/action/>.

Virginia Crime Commission Presents Findings on Transfer, Concludes Further Study Needed

On Tuesday, December 9, the Virginia Crime Commission presented its findings from a three-year study conducted on Virginia's juvenile justice system. The report focused on recidivism, disproportionate minority contact, improving access to and quality of legal counsel, accountability in the courts, mental health and educational services, rehabilitation and re-entry methods, and review of Title 16.1, the statute on automatic transfer to adult criminal court.

Commission staff presented preliminary findings at the October 14 meeting of the Crime Commission. The Commission's results were based on data collection and analysis as well as surveys, meetings, and focus groups with juvenile justice stakeholders across the state.

The Commission staff analyzed transfer data from 2006 and 2007, concluding in their findings that transfer is being used as a plea bargaining tool, requiring youth to plead guilty to avoid transfer to adult circuit court. Second, Commission staff concluded that youth tried as adults are not provided with all of the rehabilitation services available in the juvenile justice system.

The Commission staff also proposed several options that would address these problems, including giving judges sole discretion to transfer, limiting the number of crimes eligible for transfer, and giving circuit court judges authority for reverse waiver. Commission members asked staff to investigate attitudes toward these policy options among professionals including Public Defenders, Circuit Court Judges, Commonwealth's Attorneys, Court Service Unit Directors, JDR Court Judges, and the Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

At the December 9 meeting, the staff presented responses from these opinion surveys and found strong support for the following policy options:

- a) provide Juvenile and Domestic Relations (JDR) Judges with sole discretion to transfer, with the exception of mandatory transfer crimes;
- b) give circuit court judges the ability to send youth back down to juvenile court; and
- c) end the "once an adult, always an adult" policy for trying youth as adults.

Some support was found for removing certain crimes from the list of twelve charges that can currently make a case eligible for transfer to adult court by a prosecutor.

At the hearing, testimony was presented by witnesses including Eileen Gray of Virginia CURE, who supported the policy changes that were recommended by the survey. She urged the commission to look further into making these changes because, she said, it is difficult to get specific information on transferred youth. Brad Haywood, a public defender in Alexandria, also supported the proposals to change transfer statutes, citing the 2005 *Roper v. Simmons* Supreme Court ruling that juveniles are "categorically less culpable" and noting that kids who should be tried as adults are the exception, not the rule. Transfer, he argued, should be at the discretion of a judge so that prosecutors cannot use adult certification as a bargaining chip against youth.

Andy Block of Just Children and co-chair of the Virginia Coalition for Juvenile Justice, proposed implementing the

policy that restores a juvenile's status, even after being charged once as an adult.

After hearing testimony, the members of the Crime Commission recommended further study on the issue of transfer over the next year.

To learn more about the Virginia Crime Commission, visit:

<http://vscc.virginia.gov>.

To learn more about Just Children, visit:

<http://www.justice4all.org>.

FROM THE HILL



FACJJ Releases Annual Report to Congress and the President, Including Recommendations on Youth in Adult Court

The Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (FACJJ), a group comprised of member representatives of the State Advisory Groups to provide advice to the President, Congress, and the OJJDP administration, released its 2008 annual report in February. The report focuses on national compliance with the four core protections of the JJDP. Of the nineteen FACJJ recommendations, five address the issues affecting youth in the adult criminal system:

1. FACJJ recommends expanding the core protections on jail removal and sight and sound separation to apply to all youth until they reach the age of 18, regardless of which court handles their cases. This recommendation is consistent with the recommendations of the Act4JJ Working Group, the coalition effort working to improve the JJDP. FACJJ also suggests a 4-year phase-in period to remove youth charged as adults from adult jails pretrial.
2. FACJJ recommends allowing all juveniles, even those convicted as adults, to remain in juvenile facilities after they reach age 18 as allowed by the State or territory, resolving the "adult inmate" issue.
3. FACJJ recommends reexamining compliance enforcement of the core protections of the JJDP to ensure that the regulatory scheme complies with due process and with the Administrative Procedures Act (APA).
4. FACJJ recommends establishing and funding data collection systems for juveniles in the adult criminal justice system: Data should include information about age, race, ethnicity, gender, offense, pre-trial detention, transfer mechanism, sentencing outcome, and pre- and post-trial placement in jails, prisons, or juvenile facilities.
5. FACJJ recommends requiring OJJDP to conduct research on the impact on juveniles tried and/or sentenced as adults who are confined in adult facilities, the status of facility conditions in which youth are placed, and the availability of developmentally-appropriate services and programs for youth in adult jails and prisons.

The Jail Removal and Sight and Sound Separation Recommendations can be found at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/FACJJJailRecs.pdf>.

Potential JJDPA Amendment Would Transfer More Youth to the Adult Criminal Justice System

In the upcoming weeks, the Senate Judiciary Committee is planning to introduce legislation that will reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). Last year, the Committee passed a bill that included significant improvements to the JJDP, but the session ended before the bill could go any farther.

A 2-page summary of the bill as introduced can be found at:
http://www.act4jj.org/media/factsheets//factsheet_57.pdf.

The CFYJ letter in support of the bill can be found at:
http://www.act4jj.org/media/documents//document_76.pdf.

During the Committee's consideration of the bill last year, Senator Kyl (R-AZ) authored an amendment that would have taken the decision of whether a youth should be prosecuted as an adult for certain crimes away from neutral federal judges and instead placed the decision with prosecutors. The Kyl amendment also would have cast a wide net by allowing this increased discretion to be applied to youth who are charged with attempt or conspiracy to commit these crimes or for joined or lesser included offenses. The effect of such an amendment would have been an increased number of youth in the adult justice system.

Ultimately, Senator Kyl did not offer this amendment in last year's Committee consideration of the bill. However, we are anticipating that he will offer a similar amendment during the consideration of the bill in this Congress either in the Committee or on the Senate floor when the entire Senate considers the bill.

Please visit the following link to view a letter from CFYJ opposing the Kyl amendment:
<http://www.campaign4youthjustice.com/documents/CFYJLetterOpposingtheKylJJDPAAmendment-7.30.08update.pdf>.

Click the following link to view a letter from over 50 national groups opposing the Kyl amendment:
<http://www.campaign4youthjustice.org/documents/NationalSign-OnLetterinOppositiontotheKylJJDPAAmendment-7.29.08.pdf>.

Action items - We are beginning to strategize around the Kyl amendment in the 111th Congress, including writing a sign-on letter similar to the letter circulated last Congress that will be included in our next newsletter. If you have any contacts in Arizona that you think would be helpful, please e-mail Erin Davies at edavies@cfyj.org.

Youth PROMISE Act Is Reintroduced in the 111th Congress

On February 13, 2009, the Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Interventions, Support and Education Act (Youth PROMISE Act or YPA) was reintroduced in the 111th Congress with bipartisan support!

The YPA was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressmen Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA) and Michael Castle (R-DE) with 69 original co-sponsors - 58 more than when the bill was introduced last year. In the U.S. Senate, the YPA was introduced by U.S. Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME). The House bill number is H.R. 1064 and the Senate bill number is S. 435.

A press release from Congressman Scott's office can be found at:
http://www.house.gov/apps/list/press/va03_scott/pr_090218.html.

A press release from Senators Casey and Snowe can be found at:
<http://casey.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/?id=d5bf62dc-66e5-409a-91c9-31140ffa183f>.

The Youth PROMISE Act was originally introduced in the last Congress as a positive alternative to legislation in both chambers of Congress introduced by Senator Feinstein (D-CA) and Congressman Schiff (D-CA). The bills introduced by Senator Feinstein and Congressman Schiff emphasize punishment and incarceration rather than prevention and early intervention, and these bills would lead to increases in racial and ethnic disparities, increased incarceration, and more severe sanctions such as life without parole for youth in the adult criminal justice system. Senator Feinstein and Congressman Schiff have also reintroduced their legislation in the 111th Congress; the bills are designated as S. 132 in the Senate and H.R. 1022 in the House.

The Youth PROMISE Act will help support communities facing the greatest youth gang and crime challenges by providing funding to local jurisdictions to apply proven strategies that will prevent and redirect youth away from delinquency, create safer communities and save money. Under the Act, communities will form PROMISE Councils comprising representatives from law enforcement, court services, schools, social service, health and mental health providers, and community organizations, including faith-based organizations. With assistance from regional and national prevention and intervention experts, PROMISE Councils will develop a comprehensive plan for implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies in their local community that reflect the particular opportunities and challenges confronting their community. Finally, the Act will provide critical training and technical assistance to local law enforcement to help them more effectively and positively engage youth and respond effectively and appropriately to risky or unlawful youth behavior.

The 111th Congress version of the Youth PROMISE Act contains several differences from the bill as introduced in the 110th Congress. First, the bill includes a federal Interagency Gang Prevention Task Force that will provide support for prevention and intervention efforts in areas designated as Comprehensive Gang Prevention and Relief Areas. Second, the bill includes new grants to prevent or alleviate the effects of youth violence in eligible urban communities by providing violence-prevention education, mentoring, counseling, and mental health services to children and adolescents in such communities. Finally, the bill establishes a new federal National Commission on Public Safety through Crime and Delinquency Prevention.

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

http://bobbyscott.house.gov/hotissues_youthpromiseact.shtml.

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 on your organization as a support of the bill by contacting Tara Andrews of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice at Andrews@juvjustice.org.

RESEARCH AND POLICY

Wisconsin Council of Children and Families Publishes New Policy Brief

The Wisconsin Council of Children and Families has just released a new policy brief entitled "Returning 17-year-olds to the Juvenile Justice System: A Smart Choice for Our Communities and our Youth." The brief explains the details of a new measure to return 17-year-olds to the original jurisdiction of the juvenile court and discusses how returning 17-year olds to juvenile court can reduce crime, help ensure youth are held accountable, and provide youth with the skills needed to become productive citizens.

Read the policy brief at:

http://www.wccf.org/pdf/policy_brief_juvenile_justice_2009_budget.pdf.

Ohio Receives Poor Grade on Transfer Policy

The American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Ohio, the Children's Law Center, Inc., and the Office of the Ohio Public Defender released a report card earlier this month on the status of juvenile justice in the state of Ohio. The Ohio juvenile justice system received a C- for juvenile transfers.

A copy of the report card evaluating juvenile justice in Ohio is available online at: www.aclu.org/ohioreportcard.

Washington Group Releases Report on Treatment of Youth in Adult Criminal Justice System

The Washington Coalition for the Just Treatment of Youth released a report in January calling on Washington policymakers to take immediate steps to reform the state's treatment of juveniles in the adult criminal justice system. This report summarizes the breakthroughs in adolescent brain development research, studies related to recidivism rates of youth who are treated as adults, and analyzes the cases of the twenty-eight Washington youth sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

According to the report, the Washington's Sentencing Guidelines Commission data show that over 1,500 youth were sentenced in adult court between 1999 and 2007. More than one thousand youth were transferred through automatic transfer (known as "auto-declination" in Washington) and over four hundred youth were transferred through judicial waiver (or "discretionary declination"). The two most prevalent crimes for automatic transfer were robbery (40%) and assault (27%). The two most common crimes for judicial waiver were property crimes (40%) and assault (23%). While the majority of youth prosecuted as adults were in their late teens, youth as young as

eleven, twelve, and thirteen years old were tried in adult court.

In addition, almost 75 % of youth transferred to the adult system received a sentence of less than five years. Many youth received sentences that could be completed before their eighteenth birthdays, suggesting that their transfer to the adult court was unnecessary and that these youth could have received appropriate treatment in the juvenile justice system.

Finally, the report found that youth of color are disproportionately impacted by these policies. Although African American youth make up only 5.54% of Washington's juvenile population, they make up nearly 25% of the automatic transfers and over 15% of judicial waivers. Native American youth are also over-represented, making up less than 2% of the state juvenile population, but 3.14% of automatic transfer and 4.6% of judicial waivers. Although overall Asian American youth are underrepresented in transfers, making up 7.33% of the juvenile population but only 5.65% of all transfers, Asian American girls are over-represented, making up 15.22% of all girls who are transferred.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations for policymakers, including:

- 1) End the possibility of life without parole;
- 2) Create a review process for sentenced youth that promotes rehabilitation;
- 3) Eliminate automatic transfer of youth to the adult system;
- 4) Enable reverse waiver for youth to be transferred back to the juvenile system in appropriate cases;
- 5) Require youth to be held in juvenile facilities pre-trial and post-trial until age 21;
- 6) Focus on prevention and rehabilitation; and
- 7) Ensure culturally competent and gender-sensitive policies.

The full text of the report is available at:

http://www.columbialegal.org/~lumbia/files/JLWOP_cls.pdf.

Roadblocks to Reentry Report Is Updated

The Legal Action Center updated its comprehensive report, "After Prison: Roadblocks to Re-entry," which summarizes the obstacles facing people with criminal records.

The report provides: 1) a comprehensive catalogue of each state's legal barriers to employment, housing, benefits, voting, access to criminal records, parenting, and driving; 2) a report card that grades each state on whether its laws and policies help or hurt those seeking reentry; and 3) provides recommendations for federal and state policymakers.

These recommendations include eliminating barriers for those who are only arrested and not convicted of a crime; eliminating barriers that bar access to a citizen's right to vote or to basic necessities such as food, clothing, housing, and education; and eliminating categorical barriers that do not take into consideration an individual's history or circumstances. The report also recommends that states enact legislation to provide for the automatic sealing or expungement of any arrest that never led to conviction and of conviction records after an appropriate amount of

time has elapsed.

The full report is available online at:

<http://www.lac.org/roadblocks-to-reentry/index.php>.

CFYJ Calls for Student Research Papers, Offers Awards

The Campaign for Youth Justice is sponsoring its first paper competition for undergraduate and graduate students. \$250 will be awarded to one undergraduate student and \$500 will be awarded to one graduate student for an outstanding paper dealing with youth in the adult criminal system. In addition to the monetary award, the Campaign may publish the two winning papers as a policy brief, post them to our website, or circulate them in our monthly newsletter.

Undergraduate and graduate students who are currently enrolled or currently accepted into a university with a plan to enroll, or recent graduates within one year are all encouraged to apply. Papers should be original research papers between 15 and 25 pages double-spaced. They should uncover new information about the issue of youth tried as adults by predominantly citing primary sources. Papers should be submitted no later than April 1, 2009 to bandemariam@cfyj.org.

For more information about the paper competition, please visit our website at:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/CallforPapersplusTemplatefinal.pdf>.

MEDIA WRAP

***Mario's Story* Premieres on Showtime**

Watch *Mario's Story* on Showtime on Thursday, March 5 at 7:30 p.m. EST. This film interweaves the story of Mario, an inmate in one of California's maximum-security prisons, with the efforts of an unlikely group of people who have come together to win his freedom.

In 1998 Mario Rocha, a young Latino, was convicted of murder. He was 16 years old at the time of his arrest, yet tried as an adult and sentenced to life in prison. While spending over two years in juvenile hall waiting for his trial, Mario joined a writing program and discovered his talent and love for writing. Today his stories, plays and poems are published and performed in prisons throughout the country.

The film, directed by Susan Koch and Jeff Werner, will be broadcast over 25 times across the country throughout March and April.

Hollywood Reporter said the film "rivals some of the best courtroom fiction."

LA Times called it an "extraordinary documentary... Rocha's inner strength and resilience through adversity are a marvel."

For more information and airing times, visit:

<http://www.sho.com/site/schedules/product.do?episodeid=134171&seriesid=0&seasonid=0>.

To view and RSVP to the Facebook event, visit:

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=75622183528&ref=nf>.



What Matters in Juvenile Justice

Join hundreds of listeners and catch up on this month's fabulous editions of *Juvenile Justice Matters*, with hosts Eric Solomon and Jessica Sandoval and guest host Grace Bauer. Here's a summary of shows from this past month:

February 5: Abby Anderson, Executive Director of CFYJ's Connecticut partner, the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. Abby discusses Connecticut's "Raise the Age" legislation passed in 2007, which is now in its implementation phase but facing derailment due to Governor Rill's budget cutbacks.

February 12: Betsy Clarke, President and founder of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Initiative. On February 10, Governor Quinn of Illinois signed into law a long-fought bill to move 17-year-olds accused of misdemeanors back into the juvenile justice system. Betsy discusses this important victory.

February 19: Researcher Dr. Abigail Baird of Vassar College. Dr. Baird takes an enlightening look at recent findings in the area of adolescent brain development and discusses how the findings should impact juvenile justice policies.

February 26: Keela Hailes, of Washington, D.C. Keela's son was tried as an adult and sent to a Bureau of Prisons contracted facility in Devil's Lake, North Dakota. Keela had not seen her son for over two years until she was able to visit him this past December.

Listen live to *Juvenile Justice Matters* every Thursday at 4:30 p.m. EST at:

www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters. Don't forget to call in with questions to 347.843.4360.

If you miss the live broadcast, you can download the show later from Blog Talk Radio at the link above, or listen on the CFYJ site:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/radio.html>.

GET ORGANIZED

Give and Take with Family Engagement

In our last newsletter, there was an article entitled "Six Strategies for Engaging Families in System Reform." This article received a lot of attention, which gave me hope that the folks out there working for change on the ground day after day want to engage families. These people understand the need for extensive family involvement at every step of working toward the change we seek. It will take all of us to make that change, and there is no one more competent to talk about the change needed than the families of youth charged, tried and/or sentenced as adults.

Families come to systems often deep in crisis and unsure of what is needed of them or even if they are in a place to help their child at all. Many come with a strong distrust of systems in general. Given the enormous rate of Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) in our criminal and juvenile justice systems, this distrust is well founded. We can't expect families to jump into system reform efforts when they are struggling with their own child. What we should expect is that we help in any way we can to get them through their crisis and that we educate them on how the system operates and what is being done to change it. Only then can we ask families to join us in our efforts.

What, then, should we be doing to help families?

- ~Provide the information they need to understand how transfer laws work and how to change them.
- ~Invite them to meetings and make the meetings family and community friendly.
- ~Hear their voices when they speak and allow them the opportunity to criticize current practice when that is a part of their story.
- ~Give them the respect and space you give to your colleagues.
- ~Provide guidance, support and resources to help develop leadership among those who step up and show potential. You can have no better spokespersons.
- ~Give them a place of value to share their personal stories.
- ~Give credence to their experience and use that experience to build your reform efforts.
- ~Recognize the economic hardships of families and provide resources to enable their participation. You need it!

And what will families do in return?

- ~Families will provide powerful knowledge of the devastating consequences of transfer laws in an up-close and very personal way.
- ~Families will work at reform with a passion that few others ever have.
- ~Families remain in the communities to sustain reform long after the professionals go home.
- ~Families will educate others in their community in a way that no one else can.
- ~Families share a perspective that reaches others in a way that professionals seldom can. Because they come from diverse backgrounds, they reach people in ways that reports, statistics and rhetoric can't.

Some of the most powerful and successful reforms in this country have begun at the grassroots level. If you are not employing this strategy in your reform efforts, you are missing a wonderful opportunity for success. Do you need help in getting families engaged? Give us a call at the Campaign for Youth Justice at 202.558.3580. We can help you!

VOICES

Barry entered an adult prison at age 17. He is currently serving a 68-year sentence in Virginia. In a series of letters he discusses his experiences and thoughts regarding the incarceration of young offenders. He writes:

"I had to learn fast in an adult system...[there was] no mercy because of my age. I've seen it all. I know what hard time is like, but I don't know what life is like beyond these walls. I've never had a real job. I don't even know how to drive a car. I hear guys talk of marriage, being in love...I can't relate to this. I'm almost 31 years old and I've never been in a relationship. All I know, all I've experienced was prison, is prison.

"I went up for parole after serving about 12 years [of my] sentence as a youthful offender. I was denied [then and in three subsequent years] solely because of the "serious nature and circumstances of youthful offenses." My institutional record is commended every year, [with] no violent history.... My release plans are solid. [I have] a place to go [in a] viable environment. I have strong family support [and] a job lined up.... I am worthy of early release, but the parole board can't get past my youthful offenses.... [This] is about a second chance at life, to experience all the things I dream about. I have earned this. I am not asking the State for a handout.

"If there has ever been a need for juvenile justice reform [and a] change in how our youth [are treated in] the system, it is now.... We want the words 'Juveniles have a great potential for rehabilitation' to be realized across this land. The media, the public, and policymakers must understand this. It shows a lack of compassion towards our youth when the State unfairly holds them accountable for wrong choices - youthful mistakes - made at such young ages for the rest of their lives.

"Rather, youth are better served by the juvenile justice system, where a greater emphasis is placed on developmentally appropriate rehabilitative and educational services. The adult system, where youthful offenders are basically warehoused, lacks this.... [We need to be] smart on crime [as] opposed to tough on crime. In respect to youthful offenders, once earned, we should be afforded second chances."

NATIONAL MOMENTUM



Submit Nominations for Mother's Day Recognition

Mother's Day is a time when children and their families across the country show moms how much they mean to them. Moms are showered with cards, gifts, flowers and affection from their children and families.

Not all mothers, however, are able to celebrate Mother's Day with their children. For some moms, Mother's Day is just one more day that their children spend behind bars. Instead of spending the day with Mom, thousands of youth will be away from their mothers, residing in adult jails and prisons. Instead of receiving flowers or presents, the mothers of these children will spend Mother's Day worrying about their children's future. Will they be able to get an education while incarcerated? Will they be able to find a job once they are released? Many moms have worked tirelessly to change the way the justice system treats children. Their efforts may have gone unrecognized and unappreciated.

The Campaign for Youth Justice and the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) will be honoring mothers on Mother's Day 2009 for their work to reform the juvenile justice systems or change the practice of trying, sentencing, and incarcerating youth in the adult criminal justice system in their states.

CFYJ and NJJN are accepting nominations from any member of the National Juvenile Justice Network. Organizations can submit up to 5 names for recognition.

To download the information sheet and nomination form, go to:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/infoandnominationform09.pdf>.

Nomination forms can be submitted by mail, fax, or email to:

Kate Figiel
Campaign for Youth Justice
1012 14th Street, NW, Suite 610
Washington, DC 20005
Email: kfigiel@cfyj.org
Fax: 202.386.9807

The deadline for submissions is 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 17, 2009.

For more information, please contact Kate Figiel at the Campaign for Youth Justice at 202.558.3580 x 29 or kfigiel@cfyj.org.

Do More on Mother's Day

We hope you will join the Campaign for Youth Justice in recognizing mothers who are working to change the justice system for their children as well as so many others. The Mother's Day toolkit, available now, provides ideas and sample materials for connecting mothers and their children on Mother's Day, engaging more mothers in your advocacy efforts and raising awareness about this important issue.

Together, we can make this Mother's Day special.

Download the Mother's Day toolkit here in PDF (312 KB):

http://campaignforyouthjustice.org/Downloads/start/2008_Mothers_Day_Toolkit.pdf.

Or, download the Mother's Day toolkit as a Word Document here:

http://campaignforyouthjustice.org/Downloads/start/2008_Mothers_Day_Toolkit.doc.

National Council of Juvenile Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Conference

Next month, the National Council of Juvenile Family Court Judges will meet in Orlando, Florida. Bart Lubow, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Director of Programs for High Risk Youth and Families, will give the keynote address in the March 13 session, "A Roadmap for Juvenile Justice Reform," on the problems facing the nation's juvenile justice system. He will highlight the findings of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's recent "Kids Count" essay, which states that our nation's current approach to juvenile justice is costly, ineffective, and too reliant on incarceration. Mr. Lubow will then be joined by a panel of juvenile justice experts to discuss challenges to reform and review initiatives that have proven successful in helping youth in the justice system make positive transitions to adulthood.

For more on the NCJFCJ Conference, visit:

<http://www.ncjfcj.org/content/view/1147/315>.

Read more about the NCJFCJ at:

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

ON THE CALENDAR

Rally in Hartford, CT

March 2 - support the threatened "Raise the Age" bill to end automatic transfer of 16- and 17-year-olds to the adult justice system.

10:00 a.m.
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT

Georgetown Law Hosts Symposium on Poverty and Juvenile Justice, Featuring CFYJ's Neelum Arya

On March 26, 2009, the Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy, the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University, and the Georgetown Law Center Juvenile Justice Clinic will co-sponsor a symposium on the ways that juvenile justice and poverty interrelate. It is widely recognized that the conditions of poverty affecting many children across the United States are a significant factor in juvenile offending, but there has been little scholarship on the issue until now.

Entitled "The Intersection of Juvenile Justice and Poverty," the symposium will feature presentations by the authors of forthcoming articles that will be published in the Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy, including Neelum Arya, Research and Policy Director at the Campaign for Youth Justice. In three panels and a keynote address, speakers will examine how the social factors that often accompany low socioeconomic status can fuel patterns of offending and reoffending, how youth from different socioeconomic backgrounds frequently have very different experiences within the juvenile justice system, and what strategies can be employed both within and outside the juvenile justice system to break the cycle of offending and poverty.

Thursday, March 26, 2009
Symposium 1:30-5:30 p.m.
Reception 5:30-6:30 p.m.
Georgetown University Law Center
Gewirz Building 12th floor
600 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001

This event is free and open to the public.

Register for the symposium online at:
<http://www.acslaw.org/JuvenileJusticeRegistration>.

For any questions about the symposium, please contact Kate Rhudy at:
kar79@law.georgetown.edu.

California Group Sponsors Juvenile Justice Sabbath

On May 22-24, 2009, Faith Communities for Families and Children (FCFCLA), a Los Angeles-based advocacy group, is encouraging faith-based communities to observe the Juvenile Justice Sabbath by hosting events which will

draw attention to the plight of children who have been victims of violent crime as well as incarcerated children.

In his letter to faith congregations, Javier Stauring of FCFCLA writes, "If we are truly honest we must recognize that in many ways, our faith communities have failed in their responsibility to provide sanctuary for our children. Juvenile Justice Sabbath is a challenge for faith communities to unite and exercise our moral authority and influence to supplant the retributive model of justice with a restorative one that reconciles and heals persons, faith communities, and society at large."

Juvenile Justice Sabbath is an opportunity for faith-based groups to make a unified call for action. Some of the various ways in which faith-based congregations will observe the Juvenile Justice Sabbath are listed below:

- Focus the pontification, sermon, dharma talk, scripture school, call to prayer, or meditation on the weekend of Juvenile Justice Sabbath on the needs of incarcerated youth, their families and related issues.
- Distribute Juvenile Justice Sabbath Fact Sheets to members.
- Make a commitment to work with the community to promote violence prevention programs.
- Lead a discussion or seminar in the congregation about the needs and situations of incarcerated youth.
- Facilitate a Restorative Justice workshop with the youth group on the weekend of Juvenile Justice Sabbath.
- Offer prayers for everyone who has been impacted by crime, including victims, offenders, and families of both.
- Make information available for members to learn how they can become a Community Emergency Response Team Volunteer (serving victims of crime) through the District Attorney's Office.
- Make information available for members to find out how they can join a detention ministry volunteer program at a juvenile hall and/or probation camp.

Schedule a time for the congregation to visit incarcerated youth at a Juvenile Hall.

FCFCLA encourages faith communities in California and across the country to unite in raising awareness of the needs of children and families impacted by violent crime and society's systemic response to crime. If your faith community would like to observe Juvenile Justice Sabbath, you are encouraged to do so in your own way or to download the endorsement sheet below and send it to FCFCLA.

To download the endorsement sheet and make a commitment for your faith community to observe the Juvenile Justice Sabbath or for more information about the Sabbath, visit this link:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/JJSabbathendorsementform.pdf>.

To download the FCFCLA fact sheet on juveniles tried as adults in California, visit this link:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/CAYouthAdultFactSheetforJJSabbath.pdf>.

GET IN THE ACTION WITH CFYJ

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

Write to your Senator and Representatives to support the [Youth PROMISE Act](#).

Attend the [rally in Hartford](#), Connecticut to save the Raise the Age bill on March 2, 2009, at 10:00a.m. at the Legislative Office Building at 300 Capitol Ave.

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

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

Nominate a special mother who works for system change for CFYJ/NJJN's [Mother's Day Recognition Award](#).

Organize events with your community or advocacy group to make [Mother's Day](#) a special time to recognize mothers and youth affected by policies that put youth in the adult justice system.

Engage your faith community by observing the [Juvenile Justice Sabbath](#) May 22-24.

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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