



# CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

## November/December 2011 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**



## Connecticut Update

On November 15, Connecticut's own Abby Anderson was recognized for her leadership on behalf of Connecticut's children and families at Connecticut Voices for Children's 10th "First for Kids Awards" ceremony. Each recipient was celebrated for making a difference in the quality of life of children in Connecticut and enriching the state.



Anderson, a Bridgeport resident and Executive Director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, received the Statewide Child Advocacy Award for her work to improve the juvenile justice system and reduce the number of young people involved in the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. She has also served as the co-chair of the National Juvenile Justice Network and on the Board of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

"Because of Abby's work, many more young people who are involved with the juvenile justice system are getting the services and supports they need to stay in school and be successful in the community," said Alexandra Dufresne, Senior Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children, who presented Ms. Anderson with her award.

The program guide is available at: <http://www.ctkidslink.org/firstkids2011.html>.

For more information on CTJJA, visit: <http://www.ctjja.org/>

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## Colorado Update

One year ago, the Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition became a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. CJDC established a *Juvenile Defender Center*, a *Juvenile Policy Center*, and a *Juvenile Resource Center* to assure their mission of ensuring excellence in juvenile defense and advocacy and justice for all children and youth in Colorado. Since then CJDC has provided litigation support and training to hundreds of attorneys, with long term benefits to even more children and youth. CJDC is also engaged in critical juvenile justice issues in Colorado, including participation on the Juvenile Justice Task Force of the Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, the Legislative Task Force to Study School Discipline, as well as reform of



Colorado's direct file law. Moreover, CJDC is reaching out to current and formerly incarcerated youth, families, and communities to tell the real-life stories of the impact of juvenile justice policies and engaged affected communities in our work.

Every day in Colorado, a child accused of a crime can be locked in an adult jail and has the potential to be put in solitary confinement for two reasons: (1) a prosecutor decided to file the child's case in adult criminal court; and (2) a prosecutor decided the child must be held in an adult jail instead of a secure juvenile facility. The child has no right to appeal either decision, and the judge has no oversight to balance a prosecutor's extraordinary discretion. CJDC seeks to bring balance to Colorado's juvenile justice system by letting a judge decide these critical questions.

For more information, visit: <http://www.cjdc.org/>

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## **New York Update**

### **New York City Supports Changing Juvenile Court Jurisdiction**



On November 30, New York City Council approved a resolution supporting a change in New York's age of juvenile court jurisdiction for misdemeanors from age 16 to age 18. The resolution was unanimously approved by the Council. Earlier in November, a number of experts testified before the Council in favor of the proposal, with some experts calling for even more sweeping changes in New York's law.

"New York stands on the brink of momentous change. We have the opportunity to right decades of wrong, and end the legal process by which the futures of thousands of young people are thrown away each year," stated Avery Irons of CDF-NY in her testimony before the committee. "We must be thoughtful, unwavering and we must be brave. We must be everything that we ask young people with adult convictions to be when they return to society traumatized and stigmatized."

"It is not enough, however, to simply shift the prosecution of children from adult to family court or to change the laws that govern the treatment of juvenile offenders and 16- and 17-year-olds," stated Gabrielle Prisco, Juvenile Justice Director at the Correctional Association of New York in her testimony." As this body and other stakeholders consider proposals to raise New York's age of criminal responsibility, it is crucial that these proposed changes be viewed in the context of broader systemic reforms. Successful outcomes for children and society depend on a long-term and sustained investment in services and interventions that have been proven to work, on effectively matching children to the appropriate services and interventions, on eliminating racial and ethnic disparities, and on changing the underlying

culture of the justice system so that children are seen as possibilities, not problems."

For copies of these and other testimony, visit: <http://www.cfyj.org/other-testimony.html>

For more information on the efforts to change New York's law, visit the following web pages:

CDF-NY - <http://www.cdfny.org/>

IJJRA - <http://www.stopschoolstojails.org/ijjra-newyork.html>

Correctional Association - [www.correctionalassociation.org](http://www.correctionalassociation.org)

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## D.C. Update

On Thursday, December 1, the Moriah Fund, the Carter and Melissa Cafritz Charitable Trust, the Meyer Foundation, and the Public Welfare Foundation hosted a luncheon to celebrate the release of a report documenting how a collaborative effort between local D.C. foundations and national funders supported juvenile justice reform. The report, *Notorious to Notable*, details how the agency was transformed from one of the worst to one of the most notable, winning recognition as one of the Top 50 Innovations in American Government by the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government.



Key accomplishments profiled in the report include:

- Closure of the notorious Oak Hill Youth Center, D.C.'s juvenile prison;
- Replacement of Oak Hill with a modern, award-winning facility, New Beginnings Youth Development Center, geared towards youth rehabilitation and development with a nationally acclaimed educational program, the Maya Angelou Academy;
- Dramatic reduction in the over-reliance on unnecessary incarceration in the District; and the
- Creation of a network of community-based alternatives to incarceration.

The full report is available online at: <http://giving.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/notorious-to-notable-final2.pdf>.

To get more involved in advocacy efforts in D.C., visit: [www.dcly.org](http://www.dcly.org).

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### **Holiday Fundraiser and Book Drive for Youth in the Adult Criminal Justice System in D.C.**



On December 8th, 2011, the Campaign for Youth Justice and Free Minds Book Club hosted a Holiday Fundraiser Book Drive at Busboys and Poets in Washington, D.C. Several dozen people attended the event including local television News Channel8. The event raised enough money to order 178 books for the 40+ youth incarcerated at the Central Treatment Facility (CTF), an adult jail.

[Click here to view the news story on News Channel8.](#)

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### **New Website Photo-documents Juvenile-in-Justice**

Photographer Richard Ross, whose photos have been featured in numerous Campaign reports, has a new website, [Juvenile-in-Justice](#). This new site documents the placement and treatment of American youths in facilities intended to "treat, confine, punish, assist and, occasionally, harm them."



Ross' collection is a compilation of photos from over 1,000 youths and administrators at over 100 facilities in 30 states in the U.S and will be published as a book and a traveling exhibition in the fall of 2012.

To view his online collection, visit: <http://www.juvenile-in-justice.com/>

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Find Your Nearest Campaign!

For contact information from campaigns in individual states, visit the

Campaign's State Contacts page available at: <http://www.cfyj.org/parents-resource-center/find-your-state-contacts.html>.

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## NATIONAL MOMENTUM

### **Promoting Youth Leadership in All Aspects of our Work**

On Thursday, November 17, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count initiative hosted a panel discussion, "Promoting Youth Leadership in All Aspects of our Work" at their annual forum in Baltimore, Maryland, to discuss engaging youth in critical efforts to improve the lives of all children. The panel featured Karen Pittman of the Forum for Youth Investment; Robin Christian of Children First for Oregon; and Michael Kemp and Liz Ryan of the Campaign for Youth Justice.

Karen Pittman kicked off the panel with a presentation on the Forum for Youth Investment's four key principles of youth engagement: (1) Opportunity: Youth need authentic access to change-makers, as well as connections to the broader youth community; (2) Capacity: Youth need the training, tools and teams to be prepared to engage in change efforts; (3) Motivation: Youth need the time to learn about community issues and the chance to decide what issues they want to address; and (4) Foundation: Youth need to be connected to a solid organization or group that is able to foster membership, continuity and a supportive work environment. Pittman highlighted a report that the Forum for Youth Investment recently released, *Youth Organizing for Educational Change*, which documents seven youth-led efforts to change school and education-related policies. The report is available online at: <http://www.forumfyi.org/content/youth-organizing-education>.

Michael Kemp talked about his experiences in the justice system and gave specific examples of how several individuals and organizations provided support to him at critical times, including the Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop. He noted that few youth appeared to be at the conference and encouraged the group to ensure meaningful and active youth participation in next year's conference and in their advocacy efforts in their states. Wrapping up the panel, Liz Ryan highlighted ways that the Campaign for Youth Justice is working with court-involved and formerly incarcerated youth to ensure meaningful opportunities to share their perspectives with policymakers. CFYJ provides paid fellowships for court-involved and/or formerly incarcerated youth and partners with local organizations that provide direct services to youth. While acknowledging the challenges the Campaign has experienced, she stressed the importance of enhancing efforts to ensure an authentic youth voice in policy discussions and advocacy efforts. The presentation is available online at: <http://www.cfyj.org/other-testimony.html>.

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**Parents speak about juvenile justice system failure after having their children incarcerated**

The National Parent Caucus recently hosted a plenary entitled, "Family Voices in Juvenile Justice" as part of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's National Conference for Children's Justice and Safety. The plenary, moderated by CFYJ's Jessica Sandoval, included a five parent panel discussing the various issues they faced while their children were incarcerated.

The panel, attended by approximately 400 people, answered questions pertaining to their experience with the juvenile justice system. They told stories of physical and mental abuse their children experienced while incarcerated, and how this was exacerbated by practices such as solitary confinement, lockdowns, lack of educational opportunities, and incredibly stringent visitation rights for family members. They spoke about the lack of medical and mental health services and lack of resources available to their children when they were in great need of support.

Mike McIntosh, Co-Director of the NPC, father and founder of Friends and Family of Youth Incarcerated at Walnut Grove, spoke out about the abuse from which his son is still recovering. Earlier this year, McIntosh went to see his son who was incarcerated at the Walnut Grove Youth Correctional Facility in Mississippi. When he arrived, he was told his son was not at the facility, and the staff would not tell him where his son was. Three weeks later, after relentlessly trying to get the facility and the Department of Corrections to answer his phone calls, he began calling a variety of hospitals in the state. One hospital said they had his son, and after a long battle to get authorization, he arrived at the hospital only to find his son had been moved the day before.

Five and a half weeks passed before he was eventually able to locate his son, who had been relocated to four different hospitals during this time. He found his son located in the Intensive Care Unit, unable to walk or see, barely able to talk, and suffering from permanent brain damage. He was able to sit with his son for 20 minutes before staff ended the visit, and it was months before they allowed him to see his son again. Hear McIntosh's full story on *Juvenile Justice Matters* Blog Talk Radio at: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters/2011/04/28/a-discussion-with-mississippi-parent-mike-mcintosh>

Parent and founder of Missouri's first family-led juvenile justice organization, Families and Friends Organizing to Reform Juvenile Justice, Tracy McClard also spoke on the panel. McClard's story shocked the audience: she relayed the incidents that led up to her son Jonathan's suicide inside a Missouri prison three days after his 17th birthday. Like McIntosh, her story begins with severe visitation procedures. McClard went alone to see her son, as the facility still had not cleared her husband for visitation. When Jonathan put his hand on his lap after being told not to by a guard, he was rushed out of the visitation room, strip searched and put in solitary confinement. On their next and last visit, McClard and her husband could barely hear Jonathan through the thick glass and had to shout through a vent to hear him. He had just been denied transfer into Missouri's Dual Jurisdiction program that would have offered him a chance at mental health care, educational opportunities, and rehabilitation. Because he would not be going into the program, Jonathan would be transferred back into a prison in Charleston, where he had been detained previously and suffered severe and traumatizing abuse from other inmates. As a 140-pound 16-year-old, he received no protection from staff even after McClard and her family relentlessly requested to the warden that he be looked after. Three days after being assigned the transfer, Jonathan was found hanging in his cell. He

was still in solitary confinement for putting his hand on her lap during his brief visitation with McClard. To learn more about McClard's advocacy work and story, please visit:

<http://www.forj-mo.org/>

The other parents on the panel, Grace Bauer, Michelle Sanchez and Tracey Wells-Huggins spoke about many other extreme shortcomings of the juvenile justice system. They told stories of massive racial disparities found in the system, loss of parental control, structural failures for bilingual families and more.

At the end of the plenary, the parents each recommended solutions to the failures they had experienced. Michelle Sanchez strongly recommended that parents be as much involved as they possibly can, and demand the attention of corrections staff until it is received. Several parents wanted the justice system to revise its visitation procedures, require educational programs for youth, and create more rehabilitation programs in youth facilities. McClard advocated that youth never be placed in adult facilities after what happened to her son.

The parents acknowledged that their children had made mistakes, and did need constructive support to learn from their mistakes. They recognized that rigorous rehabilitation of youth will help society much more in the long run and will prevent future victimization by giving youth the opportunity to grow. They discussed how no child goes through their entire adolescence without making a mistake, but that incarceration cannot possibly be the answer for a youth's lack of healthy decision making skills.

Even though the individual circumstances of each child were different, each of the parents agreed that the current juvenile justice system has failed to provide adequate restitution to victims, fully rehabilitate youth, protect youth from violence within the facilities, and create a space of sustained family involvement.

**If you are interested in joining the National Parent Caucus, or want more information, please visit:**

<http://www.cfyj.org/parents-resource-center/local-parent-group-listing.html#contact>

## **FEDERAL UPDATE**

### **Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence**

On November 29, the U.S. Department of Justice held the first of a series of national public hearings across the country as a part of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence in Baltimore, MD. The task force is part of the Attorney General's Defending Childhood initiative, a project arising from the need to respond to the epidemic levels of exposure to violence faced by our nation's children. The hearing included a former youth offender, advocates, and experts, who testified on the abuse and violence that occur in juvenile and adult correctional facilities.



The hearing comes as the Department of Justice considers final regulations to implement the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

"There are too many young people in adult facilities that are subject to violence and sexual abuse," said Campaign for Youth Justice President and CEO Liz Ryan. "It is crucial that the Department of Justice adopt a complete ban on placing kids in adult jails and prisons."

The only young person to offer public comments during the hearing was Jabreria Handy, who currently serves as a Youth Advocate at Community Law in Action (CLIA). Jabreria, who as a youth held in an adult facility in Baltimore stated in her testimony, "At such a young age, we shouldn't be exposed to the lack of counseling, staying behind bars for long periods of time, not talking to any one and only getting showers once a week. It's just emotionally and psychologically hurtful and upsetting."

Jabreria also recounted seeing an inmate stabbed to death before her very eyes. Several participants urged the Task Force not to wait until a final report is released in December 2012 to begin reporting its findings to the Attorney General considering the urgency of the matter. On any given night in America, several thousand children are held in adult jails and prisons. Many of these kids have never been convicted of a crime.

Over the course of the year, the Task Force will learn from practitioners, policymakers, academics and community members about the extent and nature of the problem of children's exposure to violence in the United States, both as victims and as witnesses. The task force will also identify promising practices, programming and community strategies used to prevent and respond to children's exposure to violence.

The task force will have three more hearings across the country: Albuquerque, New Mexico (January 2012); Miami, Florida (March 2012); and Detroit, MI (April 2012).

For Jabreria's full testimony, visit: <http://www.cfyj.org/youth-testimony.html#jabreria>

For testimony from CFYJ's CEO & President Liz Ryan, visit: [http://www.cfyj.org/documents/Testimony\\_AGDCCT\\_11-29-11.docx](http://www.cfyj.org/documents/Testimony_AGDCCT_11-29-11.docx)

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## TAKE ACTION NOW!

### Keep Kids Out of Adult Jails and Prisons

On any given day, over 10,000 youth are detained or confined in adult jails and prisons-putting them at risk of sexual assault.

According to research by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 21% and 13% of all substantiated victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence in jails in 2005 and 2006

respectively were youth under the age of 18. Research also shows that youth are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than in a juvenile detention facility.

Through the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), the Obama administration has a critical opportunity to protect children in the justice system by banning the placement of youth under 18 in adult jails and prisons.

**Take action now to tell the Attorney General to end the rape and sexual assault of youth in the justice system by ensuring that PREA keeps youth out of adult prisons and jails. [Click here to send a letter to the Attorney General or use the sample letter below.](#)**

Sample Letter

Dear Attorney General Holder,

I am writing to you on an issue of deep concern to me: the safety and well-being of youth in the justice system.

On any given day, over 10,000 youth are detained or incarcerated in adult jails and prisons where they are at the greatest risk of sexual assault and rape of all inmates.

According to research by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, 21% and 13% of all substantiated victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence in jails in 2005 and 2006 respectively were youth under the age of 18. Research shows that youth are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than in a juvenile detention facility.

Through the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), your Administration has a critical opportunity to protect children in the justice system by issuing final PREA regulations from the U.S. Department of Justice that ban the placement of youth under 18 in adult jails and prisons.

In making this recommendation, I am joined by thousands of people all over the country representing every state in the nation, including hundreds of directly affected youth, parents and families; state and local elected officials; juvenile & criminal justice professional associations; crime victims' and survivor groups; children's advocacy groups; civil and human rights groups; mental health advocates; and faith-based organizations.

I urge you to ensure that the U.S. Department of Justice issues final PREA regulations as soon as possible and to ensure that these regulations include a ban on the placement of youth under 18 in adult jails and prisons.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

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## **Federal Cuts Threaten Protection for Children in the Justice System**

On November 18, the President signed H.R. 2112 as passed by the House and Senate, finalizing funding levels for a number of federal programs, including critical juvenile justice appropriations to states. While the final version of H.R. 2112 maintained some funding for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevent Act (JJDP A) Title II grants, JJDP A Title V grants, and the Juvenile Accountability Block Grants (JABG), the legislation includes cuts to all three programs. Funding levels are as follows:

- Title II at \$40 million (Senate proposed \$45 million; House proposed \$40 million)
- Title V at \$20 million (Senate proposed \$33 million; House eliminated funding)
- JABG at \$30 million (Senate proposed \$30; House eliminated funding)

These proposed cuts - down 54% in the last two years - threaten to undermine states' ability to maintain protections for youth, reduce delinquency, and further improve youth and family success, and promote community safety. They also have the potential to result in the increased use of incarceration for youth, including placement of children in adult jails, and run counter to research that shows the public supports rehabilitation and treatment for youth.

For more than 35 years, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) has provided critical federal funding to states which comply with a set of core requirements designed to protect children from the dangers of adult jails and lockups; keep children charged with status offenses out of locked custody; and address the disparate treatment of youth of color in the justice system.

JJDP A's Title II funding helps states comply with the core requirements and helps ensure that states have resources to build effective state systems. Title V is the only federal program that provides delinquency prevention funding at the local level to reach youth at risk and help keep them out of the juvenile justice system. In addition to these JJDP A programs, funding through the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) program assists state efforts to effectively strengthen services and supports for court-involved youth, including alternatives to detention.

These cuts have the potential to:

- Undermine the implementation of the JJDP A core requirements, such as the Jail Removal provision that prohibits the placement of youth in adult jails and lockups ([Click here for a fact sheet on the dangers of placing youth in adult jails](#));
- Result in more youth incarcerated in adult jails -- costly and dangerous facilities where youth are placed at severe risk of suicide, physical and sexual abuse, recidivism, and a lifetime of disconnection from education and work;
- Erode and jeopardize nationwide progress on juvenile justice improvements that have led to historic low rates in youth-offending across all U.S. states and territories; and
- Eliminate support for cost-effective delinquency prevention programs and alternatives to incarceration, which increase public safety and decrease recidivism

and public costs. For every \$1 spent in prevention and community-based alternatives, taxpayers save up to \$8 in criminal justice costs.

These cuts run counter to recent public opinion research released on October 12, that shows that the public rejects placement of youth in adult jails and prisons and instead strongly favors:

- Rehabilitation and treatment approaches, such as counseling, education, treatment, restitution and community service;
- Requiring the juvenile justice system to reduce racial and ethnic disparities; and
- Independent oversight to ensure youth are protected from abuse while in state or local custody.

### How You Can Help

1. Contact your Members of Congress.
2. Call your local media outlets and urge them to editorialize in opposition to these proposed cuts.

Please share this information with your networks. To stay updated on the Act 4 Juvenile Justice campaign, sign up for updates at: [www.act4jj.org](http://www.act4jj.org).

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## MEDIA WRAP

### Young Kids, Hard Time

*Young Kids, Hard Time*, a documentary series from Calamari Productions and MSNBC about youth charged as adults in Indiana, premiered in Washington, D.C. at the National Press Club on November 10, before airing on MSNBC on November 20. The event was well-attended and included a panel of experts on this issue. The film's director, Karen Grau, moderated a Q & A session with Author and Campaign for Youth Justice Spokesperson, Dwayne Betts, along with Miriam Krinsky, Lecturer at UCLA School of Public Policy and Former Federal Prosecutor: The Honorable Brian Huff, Presiding Juvenile Judge in Birmingham, Alabama and President of Alabama's Juvenile Judges Association, and Mike Dempsey, Director of Wabash Valley Correctional Facility and featured in the series.



Calamari Productions was granted sweeping access inside the maximum security Wabash Valley Correctional Facility in Carlisle, Indiana - the only adult prison in the state of Indiana that houses kids sentenced as adults. *Young Kids, Hard Times* delves into the everyday struggles encountered by 54 kids on the Youth Incarcerated as Adults

cellblock.

In attendance at the D.C. premiere were congressional staff members, officials from the Department of Justice, state Supreme Court justices, advocates, and students. Grau talked about her experiences in juvenile abuse and neglect court as a motivator for her to pursue issues surrounding juvenile justice and child welfare. "My mom said, 'if something touches you so deeply and so profoundly that you just can't forget about it, it probably means you're meant to do something about it.'" She has produced films in this arena for the past 13 years and *Young Kids, Hard Times* is the 16th documentary film she has produced together with NBC specifically on juvenile justice and child welfare.

The film is narrated by Rick Springfield, a former actor on *General Hospital* who went on to become a Grammy award winning singer and *New York Times* best-selling author. Springfield struggles with depression and attempted suicide at the age of 17.

Following the movie screening and the introductions, panelists were asked questions by the audience. Huff responded to a question from the audience. "I thought it was very telling and very interesting, the young man [in the film] who mentioned the first time he ever got in trouble was in school. What are we doing as an education system not only to help these kids but to make sure we're not pushing these kids into the juvenile justice system and into the adult justice system?"

A member of the audience asked how kids end up being tried as adults when it is known that they have a greater capacity to change and be rehabilitated. Krinsky responded, "There's not a person in this room that would dispute the fact that it's gone wrong, very wrong. We as a country incarcerate more kids than any country in the world. We're the only country in the world that will impose a life sentence on a child." She said the questions shouldn't be about how we got there, but rather, "how can we turn the tide and get back on the right path?" She noted the Campaign for Youth Justice's [polls](#) and the public's support for not giving up on the young people who have committed crimes.

Betts also responded, "How did we get here? Somebody starts writing essays saying 'ok we have super predators out there who are going to be robbing and raping our children.' They say 'our children,' we understand 'our children,' means not young black kids who live in poor communities who don't end up at Harvard. 'Our children' are not those kids." He continued, "How 'we' got here? We need to acknowledge that 'we' means something different from 'them.' It's surprising to see a young 12-year-old white boy in prison for life. That is surprising," he said in reference to *Young Kids, Hard Time*.

MSNBC will be airing Part 2 of *Young Kids, Hard Time* in the near future. For more information on upcoming episodes visit: [www.calamariproductions.com](http://www.calamariproductions.com).

If you were unable to make it to the Washington, D.C. premiere, you are in luck. The Campaign's radio show, *Juvenile Justice Matters*, aired an extended program this month, re-broadcasting the panel discussion from the Premiere. Enjoy this and other programs at: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters>.

Ratings for the MSNBC premiere were through the roof. *Young Kids, Hard Time*, came in first place in the 10 p.m. timeslot, with about 300,000 viewers. If you liked *Young Kids, Hard Time* and would like to see more episodes, please write a letter of support like the one below to the address below:

MSNBC Long Form Programming  
Attention: Executive Producer  
MSNBC  
30 Rockefeller Plaza, 27th Floor  
New York, NY 10112



December 2, 2011

MSNBC Long Form Programming  
Attention: Executive Producer  
MSNBC  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
27th Floor  
New York, NY 10112

Dear Executive Producer,

On behalf of the Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ), a national organization working to end the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth in the adult criminal justice system, I am writing to thank you for producing the *Young Kids, Hard Time* documentary and urge you to consider additional programs on youth in the adult criminal justice system.

As you heard in *Young Kids, Hard Time*, 10,000 youth are held in adult jails and prisons on any given day. Researchers estimate that roughly 250,000 youth are prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system every year.

Calamari's exclusive access to adult facilities is vital in our field. To date, there unfortunately has been very limited advocacy on behalf of this population since these young people are not considered part of the juvenile justice system. These youth are often invisible and rarely included in data reports documenting the needs of youth in the system. Calamari's documentary addresses this gap by putting a face and a story on this issue.

From the outstanding MSNBC viewership during the Nov. 20th premiere, it shows that the American public is very interested in this issue. In fact, a recent poll conducted by GBA Strategies, found that the public supports independent oversight to ensure youth are protected from abuse while in state or local custody (84%) and that the public rejects placement of youth in adult jails and prisons (69%).

This documentary is not only an educational tool for your viewers, but will make a huge impact with advocates and policy makers. MSNBC is lucky to have Calamari as a

partner and should consider more programs related to kids in the adult criminal justice system.

Thanks again for your network's continued support.

Sincerely,

Liz Ryan  
President & CEO  
Campaign for Youth Justice

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## RESEARCH

### **New Report on Massachusetts Youth in the Adult System**

Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ) recently released *Minor Transgressions, Major Consequences*, which outlines the research, findings, and recommendations about how best to handle 17-year-olds in the adult criminal justice system in Massachusetts. The key findings of the report include: the vast majority of 17-year-olds in the adult system are charged with minor, non-violent offenses and overall have a similar or less serious offense profile than their younger teen peers; sending teens through adult court and adult facilities actually increases crime, as well as all of the human and financial costs associated with crime; and teens in the adult system are unlikely to receive the educational services to which they are legally entitled. CfJJ estimates that two-thirds of 17-year-olds' arraignments are either dismissed or end without a sentence imposed. In fact, fewer than 10% of juveniles and 12% of 17-year-olds who are arraigned in court are actually sentenced and incarcerated as a result of their offense. In light of the facts in the report, CfJJ demonstrates that the Massachusetts juvenile system has both the capacity and expertise to handle 17-year-olds, and recommends that Massachusetts raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction.

The full report is available at: [http://www.cfyj.org/documents/FR\\_Minortransgressions\\_2011.pdf](http://www.cfyj.org/documents/FR_Minortransgressions_2011.pdf)

For more information, visit CfJJ at: <http://www.cfjj.org/>

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### **New Resource for State Legislators from Models for Change**

Models for Change collaborates with selected states to advance juvenile justice reforms that effectively hold young people accountable for their actions, provide for their rehabilitation, protect them from harm, increase their life chances, and manage the risk they pose to themselves and to public safety. At their Sixth Annual National Working

Conference for the initiative held in December in Washington, D.C., there were numerous conference sessions sharing valuable knowledge about what is working across states. Specific elements of the conference of interest to readers of the CFYJ newsletter include presentations by reformer Elizabeth ("Betsy") Clarke from the Juvenile Justice Initiative, sharing her perspective on how to implement and sustain reforms over the long-term, and Gabriella Celeste speaking about the recent reforms in Ohio. In addition, through a generous grant from the MacArthur Foundation, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) has published a juvenile justice guidebook for state legislators.

The entire guidebook can be found online here:

<http://www.ncsl.org/documents/cj/jjguidebook-complete.pdf>.

The chapter on Adolescent Development and Competency, which discusses youth prosecuted in the adult system, can be found online here: <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/cj/jjguidebook-complete.pdf>.

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## **NPC UPDATE**

### **Jajuana Calloway on Losing Her 14-Year-Old to a 30-Year Prison Sentence**

Jajuana Calloway is a mother, entrepreneur and advocate for juvenile rights. She lives in Culver City, California. Here is her story:

At the age of 14, my son was sentenced to 30-years in prison without the possibility of parole.

My boy, Christopher, was convicted and sentenced under a set of laws passed by the Georgia Legislature in 1994. This package of misguided legislation popularly known as "the Seven Deadly Sins," was an effort to lock up juveniles without any meaningful opportunity for rehabilitation and without any possibility of parole.

He is not, I'll make clear, an innocent victim. We are responsible for our own actions. But the circumstances of his crime did not then and do not now warrant destroying his life with a 30-year sentence.

A group of older teens put him up to robbing a woman and stealing her car. During the ordeal, she was tied up, understandably terrified, but not injured. After my son and the others were arrested, the older ones put the blame on Christopher. With the help of their testimony, he was convicted as an adult and is currently serving the 30-year mandatory sentence without the possibility of parole.

He has already served 14 years to date, and has been incarcerated with men who have lighter sentences for more severe crimes. Even if he had received a life sentence for his actions, he would now be eligible for parole after serving 14 years.

For the last two years, I've been aggressively advocating - not only on Christopher's

personal behalf - but for all juveniles who find themselves in the middle of a very unbalanced and harshly brutal method of sentencing. It is indeed my most earnest hope that I can lend my voice to an effort to create equal justice in our judicial system.

Abraham Lincoln said, "He who sees cruelty and does nothing about it is himself cruel." I feel this statement is applicable to the current judicial system, which requires lengthy mandatory sentencing for juveniles as young as 14, with no opportunity for parole.

As I began this tumultuous journey on behalf of my son, I was saddened to discover that the public is largely ignorant of Georgia's and the nation's laws governing juveniles. Many are in the dark as it relates to these appalling harsh realities that so many of our nation's young people, all under the age of 18, are enduring as they are being tried as adults and serving disproportionately long sentences in violent adult prisons.

I am troubled as I dig deeper in my research and engage in dialog with other mothers, fighting their way through to make sense of such an unjust system. This fight has forced me to take a more aggressively active role in sharing this story and educating the masses about this horrendous, unjust judicial system.

While Christopher and others must accept the consequences of their actions, only an inhumane and unjust system would apply Georgia's laws (SB 440 & SB 441) to children, removing them from the juvenile justice system and placing them in an overly populated adult prison system, where the chance of rehabilitation is almost non-existent.

After two years, Christopher was placed under a 24-hour suicide watch after slitting his wrist. Being incarcerated from a young age with murderers and hardened criminals can extract that kind of emotional toll on a young teen. He has, to say the least, been emotionally damaged.

Mixing men and children together in prisons creates the perfect school for debauchery. I was devastated to discover that he was physically and emotionally assaulted, and a prison guard turned a blind eye during these disgusting incidents.

My son and other young inmates do not belong in an adult prison where other seasoned inmates prey on their weaknesses, innocence and vulnerabilities. We need to do away with draconian laws that oppress and humiliate our children. Instead, they need a system that will give them the help they so desperately need.

My son is currently enduring a living hell which will last until he is 44 years old. During these 14 years of serving his sentence, Christopher continues to express his genuine remorse about his choices as a teenager and continually expresses repentance for his actions. However, he can do little else to make restitution while in prison.

Recently, Georgia's new governor, Nathan Deal, has quietly indicated that he may be willing to reassess SB 440 and 441. It is still a long way from becoming reality, but reforming the 1990s-era laws could provide my son the opportunity to be heard in this life. As an advocate, it also provides me a chance to help change these horrific, unjust laws that so detrimentally effect all youth.

As Christopher's mother, I want his story to be yelled from every rooftop. I want him

and others like him to have an opportunity for restoration, rehabilitation and a safe reintegration into society.

I want them to be given a second chance to have a productive life.

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For more information about Jujuana Calloway's story, please contact Shanta' Gray, Program Coordinator of the National Parent Caucus at [sgray@cfyj.org](mailto:sgray@cfyj.org).

If this story has touched your heart or you feel empowered to be a juvenile justice advocate, please consider joining the National Parent Caucus (NPC). The NPC has a monthly call the first Thursday of each month. We invite anyone who cares about the well-being of children involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile or criminal justice system to join us on this call.

For more information about the National Parent Caucus, contact Shanta' Gray at [sgray@cfyj.org](mailto:sgray@cfyj.org).

-Shanta Gray, Program Coordinator

## VOICES

Michael Kemp has been working as a fellow for the Campaign for the last three months. He was recently awarded a 2011 Activist Award from the Washington Peace Center. The D.C. community nominated him for his important work stopping the school to prison pipeline and with Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop. He was honored at the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Activist Awards Grassroots Gala on Thursday, December 8th, where he recited a poem reflecting on youth and activism. Thank you so much for all your hard work Michael and congratulations!



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS! ARE YOU ENGAGED?

By Michael Kemp

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This is a time of togetherness, a time where friends and families must come together to show that they care about one another. It's not about the physical gifts that are given during this season, but it's the gift of love and support that matters the most. Just knowing you have someone there for you makes a huge difference. I can't name anyone who can honestly say they don't need anyone by their side. But I've learned that however much you want to support others, you can't give something that you are yet to have yourself. But when you find that love of yourself, don't be afraid to share that love with someone who may really need it, especially at a time like this.

The first word that comes to mind when I think about engagement is commitment. Perhaps this is because of the marital association with the word engagement, but being

engaged to someone or in something requires a commitment to that someone or something. It requires being selfless: being there for someone or a cause because you care and want to make a difference. If I have anything to do with it I'm hoping for the best possible outcome not only for myself, but most importantly for the person or cause I was there for in the first place. I can honestly say my life would've been totally different if I would have had the proper engagement during my upbringing, but life is life so I also wouldn't be writing this article.

I want to stress the importance of being engaged not only during this wonderful holiday season, but also throughout the whole year. There is always someone out there who needs love, support, or someone to actually show them that someone cares. Even taking the time out of your day to sit down to talk to someone about their problems can help because it shows that you're willing to give that listening ear. It's sad to say that it took for me to get in trouble with the law to receive the proper help and support I needed; however, I want to emphasize it wasn't the criminal justice system that gave me that help. It was a few organizations with some good hearted people who were willing to engage with me.

The thought I want to leave you with is this: no kid should be sacrificed to the adult criminal justice system, and a kid should not have to be incarcerated for people to see the damage that has been done. We need more programs and organizations out in the communities to engage with the youth before things "go wrong." You can't fix something you can't see. So if you were blind before, I hope you're not now. Have a happy holiday and stay engaged...

Michael Kemp @ Campaign for Youth Justice

For more articles from Michael, visit: <http://www.cfyj.org/e-newsletter.html>

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## ON THE CALENDAR

Mark Your Calendars for Some Upcoming Events!

Save the Date

### Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing

March 5-11, 2012

Healing Justice Coalition Invites you to join in celebration of Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing 2012!

Participate at your own place of worship through prayer, service and action to raise awareness on the needs of victims, incarcerated children and families of both.

This year in California over 300 faith-based organizations and schools participated in JJWFH 2011. Take a look at some of the activities from that event!



Visit the [website](#) for materials and ideas on how your congregation can be a part of this annual event that benefits some of our most marginalized youth.

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## TAKE ACTION, SPREAD THE WORD



On November 3, Free Minds Book Club released the brand new Literary Journal, *They Call Me 299-359: Writings by the Incarcerated Youth of Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop*, an anthology of essays and poems written, edited and compiled by incarcerated youth from Washington, D.C.

Every year, dozens of teenagers in Washington, D.C. are charged and incarcerated as adults for felony crimes. While most are eventually found innocent and released, other go on to serve sentences that range from a year to life. When they turn 18, they are transferred from D.C. Jail to federal prisons.

*They Call Me 299-359* contains hundreds of poems and essays written by those young men behind bars. After a call went out for submissions to the anthology, entries flooded in from young men around the country to the editorial panel of three - Kenneth, Jonas and Paulo, who are also locked up.

Editor Paulo says: "Writing has reshaped my life and thoughts. It has given me ideas of how to see and live life in a positive spin. Through my writing, I have come to speak to the world."

The idea for the book grew out of the reaction of families, audiences, law enforcement, and judges to public readings of poems and essays from DC's young inmates. *They Call Me 299-359* gives voice to teens who have grown up in some of Washington, D.C.'s most struggling and impoverished neighborhoods. Its authors paint a picture of struggle and fears, but also hope for change and redemption," says Kelli Taylor, Free Minds Co-Founder and Board Chair.

Copies of *They Call Me 299-359* are available for a donation. If you would like to obtain the book, please contact the Juliana Ratner, Program Director at [juliana@freemindsbookclub.org](mailto:juliana@freemindsbookclub.org) or 202.758.0829.

Free Minds is also using the book as a teaching tool as part of its "On the Same Page: Free Minds Poetry in the Community" initiative. If you know of a class or organization that would be interested in having Free Minds Poets present, please contact Juliana.



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## Host a Film Screening

Are you interested in raising awareness and/or learning more about the impact of prosecuting youth in the adult criminal justice system? By hosting a film screening, you will be the catalyst for change. You can use these parties just to learn more, or to raise awareness, recruit volunteers, and educate legislators. Hosting a party is easy, important and a great way to educate others about this atrocity. Our Recommended Film List and House Party Kit include a list of films to watch, a sample invitation, a planning checklist, and ideas to make your party personal and fun.

Click [here](#) for a list of films.

Click [here](#) for information on how to host a house party film screening.

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP



The momentum for change must continue! With your help, we can expand grassroots campaigns on the ground in new states to show support for reform.

To launch grassroots campaigns in new states in 2012, we have initiated the "12 by 12" Campaign to raise \$12,000.

Please consider donating \$12 and inviting 12 of your friends to each donate \$12.

To donate, go to <http://www.cfyj.org/donate.html>.

Tell 12 friends about the "12 by 12" Campaign by forwarding this email.

Let's work together to stop these inhumane, unjust and ineffective policies!

Thank you for your time and consideration!

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## CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

**Celebrate Your Successes: A Campaign Approach to Ending the Practice of Prosecuting Youth as Adults**

*by Liz Ryan*

*We are asked regularly why we take a campaign approach to ending the practice of prosecuting youth in adult courts and thought we'd start a series of conversations in our newsletter to discuss all the various aspects of a "campaign."*

As your campaign is underway and you meet one or more of your goals, be sure to take time and celebrate your success! It is crucial that we take time to celebrate the milestones that we achieve towards our long-term goals of eliminating the prosecution of youth in adult criminal court. Here are some ideas on how to celebrate:

**(1) Thank everyone involved**

Call, write a short email or send a hand written note to everyone who was part of achieving your goal! A thank you makes people feel appreciated for their contributions and keeps people engaged and enthusiastic in the work!

**(2) Publicly recognize your supporters**

Consider listing your supporters on an email, newsletter or website thanking them for their contributions. Write a short article about the effort and include brief quotes from some of the individuals involved.

**(3) Include a celebration in a regularly scheduled activity**

If your coalition meets monthly, include a celebration as part of the agenda. Bring a cake, cupcakes, or other snacks. Create space for participants to share stories of the success and recognize people for their efforts.

**(4) Host a celebration**

It is crucial that we actually take time to celebrate success! We are sometimes so caught up in the work that we keep going without taking time to "smell the roses" so to speak. Planning a celebration can be fun and engaging and an opportunity to put your creativity to work.

**(5) Document your success**

Take a photo of the celebration, the cake, and the people involved! Or video tape the event. Keep a list of people that were part of the effort and what they contributed. If time permits, write a short report capturing the success. These photos, videos and documents will help you to remember what you've achieved and also get you through the difficult moments when it feels like success is far away.

For previous articles, visit the campaign resource center at:

<http://www.cfyj.org/advocacy-resource-center.html>.

*Please share your feedback, comments and ideas on this article! We'd also like to know what questions you have about campaigns and what topics you'd like to see in future articles.*

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## EXTRAS

### Greg Johnson - Federal Field Organizing Fellow

CFYJ welcomes Greg Johnson as the new Federal Field Organizing Fellow. Greg is responsible for advocacy, outreach, and events in targeted states with core constituencies, including youth and families who are directly affected by the justice system, youth groups, youth service providers, grassroots organizations and other advocacy groups. Prior to joining CFYJ, Greg worked as an organizer and training coordinator with Southern Echo, Inc., a community organizing, training, and technical assistance organization working to empower black, brown, and low-wealth communities. Greg has also interned with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Advancement Project. He is a graduate of The George Washington University Law School.

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Campaign for Youth Justice | 1012 14th Street NW, Suite 610 | Washington | DC | 20005