



 Campaign for Youth Justice

## April 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

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### Nevada Update

#### Advocates Testify in Favor of Assembly Bill 272

On Saturday, April 9th, more than two dozen advocates and family members from Las Vegas testified at a legislative hearing and offered public comments in favor of Assembly Bill 272. This legislation will require that youth under 18 who are charged as adults be placed in juvenile detention facilities rather than adult jails. It will also raise the age at which youth may be tried as adults from 14 to 16 years old for some offenses. By placing some youth in the juvenile rather than the adult justice system, this legislation will reduce the dangers youth face when detained in adult jails and the likelihood that youth will re-offend.

In her testimony, Esther Rodriguez-Brown, Founder of The Embracing Project, urged the Assembly to invest in reform. She argued, "To create better communities we have to invest in our children. When they make mistakes, they should be disciplined, but they also must be treated and educated." For her full testimony, visit [http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/Testimony\\_NV\\_042011.pdf](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/Testimony_NV_042011.pdf)

In addition to all of the testimonies, more than a dozen attorneys, advocates, and experts signed on to a letter addressed to The Honorable William C. Horne, Chairman of the Committee on Judiciary in the Nevada General Assembly. One signee was the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada (ACLU), whose Legislative and Policy Director, Rebecca Gasca, said, "The ACLU is committed to advocating for our kids and families in Nevada...The adult system is not the place to rehabilitate our youth. We must do what's right and pass AB 272."

Placing youth in adult jails or prisons puts them at risk of assault and abuse. According to the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission Report, youth incarcerated in adult facilities are the group most at risk of sexual assault. Statistics compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics confirm that under-18 youth comprise a disproportionately high percentage of victims of prisoner-on-prisoner violence. Some facilities "protect" these at-risk youth by placing them in solitary confinement in which they are frequently locked down for 23 hours a day in small cells with no natural light. These conditions can cause anxiety, paranoia, and exacerbate existing mental disorders, putting youth at an increased risk of suicide.

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### North Carolina Update

## North Carolina Bill to Raise the Juvenile Age: The Time Has Come

The North Carolina legislature has introduced HB 632/SB 506, a bipartisan bill to Raise the Juvenile Age. The primary sponsors are Representatives David Lewis, Shirley Randleman, Marilyn Avila and Alice Bordsen. Within the Senate, the bill is sponsored by Senators Fletcher Hartsell, Stan Bingham and Floyd McKissick while Senator Ellie Kinnaird has also worked hard on this bill. North Carolina is one of just two states in the nation that continues to treat 16- and 17-year-olds as adults. This measure is long overdue.

Even though HB 632/SB 506 will take years to be put into place and implemented, it represents an important step in the right direction for North Carolina. The bill anticipates a gradual transition of policy: first transferring youth ages 16 to 16 and a half, then ages 16 and a half to 17, then ages 17 to 17 and a half, and finally ages 17 and a half to 18. The legislation would go into effect in 2015 and gives the state until 2018 to transition fully.

For additional information, visit: <http://www.ncchild.org/issue/safety/main-area-of-work/raise-age-keep-children-out-adult-system>

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## Maryland Update

### Maryland General Assembly Reviews Need For New Youth Jail

In response to a citywide campaign, the Maryland General Assembly has taken steps to delay the construction of the proposed \$104 million jail to house youth charged as adults. Following pressure from numerous community organizations, youth and family members, the General Assembly amended the capital budget to prohibit the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) from spending any funds for the construction of the New Youth Jail. The General Assembly will review a report from the National Council Crime and Delinquency, which has been tasked with re-assessing the actual need for beds for juveniles awaiting trial on adult charges in Baltimore based on the status quo of law and practices. The report is scheduled to be released in early May. The Just Kids Partnership along with a variety of other organizations is working to press the General Assembly Budget Committees to hold hearings on the Department's actions and the findings of the report.

The Just Kids Partnership continues to educate and engage youth and families in the fight to stop the jail. Along with its partners, Just Kids has organized community meetings across the city to inform the community and solicit ideas from community members. Community meeting attendees have participated in "stop and dials" to contact the governor and members of the General Assembly to stop construction of the jail and find a smarter use of Maryland tax dollars.

For additional information, visit: <http://www.justkidsmaryland.org/>

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## Arizona Update

### "Reverse Remand" Bill Passes

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, legislation (SB 1191) allowing for reverse remand hearings in discretionary charges to adult court passed the Arizona House with a vote of 58-1-1. The Governor signed it into law on April 21, 2011. The bill follows legislation enacted in 2007 that allowed for reverse remand hearings in youth sex-offense cases.

Congratulations to the Children's Action Alliance of Arizona for spearheading efforts on this important legislation!

For additional information on youth in adult court in Arizona, visit:

Fact Sheet on SB 1191:  
[http://www.azchildren.org/MyFiles/11leg/sb\\_1191.pdf](http://www.azchildren.org/MyFiles/11leg/sb_1191.pdf)

"Improving Public Safety by Keeping Youth Out of the Adult Criminal Justice System" Report on Arizona:  
[http://www.azchildren.org/MyFiles/10%20issues/2010\\_jj\\_pub.pdf](http://www.azchildren.org/MyFiles/10%20issues/2010_jj_pub.pdf)

Children's Action Alliance:  
[www.azchildren.org](http://www.azchildren.org)

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## Dwayne Betts Speaks to Youth at Michigan State University

### "Don't fall asleep in your enemy's dream"

*By Rome Meeks*

*Graduate Student, Michigan State University*

 Dwayne Betts at MSU

The quote above, along with many others, were words of encouragement from Mr. Dwayne Betts in an auditorium full of mostly high school students, along with MSU students, faculty, and staff on Thursday, April 22nd at MSU's 7th National Conference on Race in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century America. The theme for the 2011 conference was race and justice. As he took the stage, his presence alone demanded attention. He arrived with a message for us all; Don't fall asleep in our enemy's dream; do more than what is expected because the choices we make today will determine our tomorrow. He also stressed that academic knowledge is key, and adults can do more to aid youth in the right direction.

Mr. Betts encouraged youth not to fall victim to an "enemy's dream" and the pressures and "glamour" of crime. What may seem appealing is a false reality: it's the enemy's dream. Hard work and knowledge are, in fact, glamorous, but the idea of hard work is not what one sees and aspires toward. Betts stressed that the idea of academic hard work may not be appealing because youth may not personally see a lot of people working hard to succeed academically. A lot of youth don't personally know people who have graduated from high school or who attend college, but they do see people with material goods from selling drugs and other illegal activities. He explained to the crowd that this is a false image of success.

"This is why I do what I do" said Mr. Betts. "I did not have people to talk to me in an auditorium about their life and what I should or should not do and so this is why I am here, so you can't say you have not been told."

Mr. Betts offered example after example to emphasize that today's choices could be tomorrow's fate. Growing up in Maryland, he and others *were* expected to succeed. "Never would anyone have thought I would have ended up in prison," he said. He encouraged the audience to do more than what is expected of them: to live in a way that does not necessarily please others but rather promotes success for their own future. He challenged them to strive for what they want as they find their own voice in the world and not to fall victim to the false realities of someone else's expectations or dreams. Haters may be your motivation at first, but after a while the "haters stop hatin'," and when they do, he explained, there has to be something inside of us that encourages us from within to strive for better.

Mr. Betts reflected on how he did only the minimum in school and received a 3.0 GPA because he did not understand how important his performance was for his future. He stressed, "Don't do just minimum and what is expected. Do more than that." Mr. Betts reflected on reading in prison; although it was not expected of him, he read all the time because he really had nothing else to do. No one would have expected him to read, but not only did he read, he read a book a day, maybe two or three a day. Knowledge, he explained, is the key.

Mr. Betts told the audience several times that what we do today will impact our future. He gave many examples from the books he had read, his teachers, and his immature antics, all of which ultimately impacted his future. He seemed to be pleading with the high school students to be mindful of their actions today because no one thinks that they will be in a position of failure.

Lastly, Mr. Betts had a message not only for the high school students but for the MSU staff, students and faculty as well. I was able to ask him what, if anything, his upbringing lacked that led him to make some of the mistakes he had made. Betts shared that the turning point for youth in today's society is the presence of influential people in their lives. Do we, as adults, understand the power that we have to change a person's life by helping them to see the world in a different way and by encouraging a young person when they may have never been encouraged in their lives to do well? Mentorship, a simple concept, but one we simply do not practice.

The last comment came from an adult in the audience who described how she found herself in limbo because she found it difficult to have only two options: sending juveniles to prison or not sending them to prison. Mr. Betts stopped her, and he pleaded with us not to believe that there are only two options. "There should be other options for youth," Mr. Betts said. He quoted the judge who sentenced Betts to prison, "I am under no illusion that sending you to prison will help." Betts explained that prison does not help, and yet, the prison population continues to grow. "We can do something, we must do something," he said. We must do something so that we do not live in a world where prison becomes a part of our lives and livelihood. He pleaded with the high school students once again not to make the mistakes he had made and to take seriously his presence because no one ever told him not to make the mistakes they had made. He concluded, "I do what I do, because no one ever told me what not to do."

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## FEDERAL UPDATE

### Update on the President's Budget Proposal on Juvenile Justice

As we mentioned in the last several newsletters, the President's FY12 budget proposed a major restructuring of federal juvenile justice funding to the states and territories. Thanks to everyone's collective efforts to inform



the Administration, we are pleased to report that the Administration has proposed an alternative proposal that would address the concerns raised by the juvenile justice field.

Under the new proposal, released on April 1, 2011, the U.S. DOJ would devote \$110 million as formula funding for the two major juvenile justice programs, which includes \$80 million under Title II, Part B of the JJDP Act-Formula Grants program and \$30 million under the Juvenile Accountability Block Grants (JABG) program, and then allocate \$10 million in a demonstration program to encourage innovation and juvenile justice system improvements.

According to the U.S. DOJ's announcement, "This revamped approach would preserve, and add funding to, the important Part B Formula Grants program; continue the JABG program; and create a new discretionary funding program to encourage innovation and evidence-based reforms in the juvenile justice system, which would showcase approaches other states may then consider embracing."

To obtain a copy of the U.S. Department of Justice's announcement, visit:

<http://www.ojdp.gov/eneews/11juvjust/110401.html>

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### **With Support from Many "Heroes," CFYJ Submits Comments to DOJ to Remove Youth from Adult Jails and Prisons**

On April 4, CFYJ submitted a letter signed by over 1,300 individuals and organizations from every state in the country asking the U.S. Department of Justice to remove youth from adult jails and prisons as part of the implementing regulations for the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). PREA was signed into law by President Bush in 2003 to address sexual violence behind bars. The creation of the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission (NPREC), a bipartisan federal commission charged with developing national standards to address prisoner rape to be later ratified by the Attorney General, was a key component of PREA. From 2004 to 2009, the NPREC held public hearings and had expert committees to draft the standards. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) released the NPREC standards for public comment in 2010 and developed their proposed rules in 2011. Unfortunately, the proposed rules do not protect youth in adult facilities. For the past several years, CFYJ has been advocating for the removal of youth from adult jails and prisons as a way to prevent the sexual assault of youth in adult facilities. CFYJ would like to thank all of the people who signed the letter and would specifically like to recognize and thank the following individuals for their tremendous efforts in gathering the signatures of hundreds of other people:

Julio Abreu  
 Judith Blau  
 Dr. Kathryn A. Branch  
 Katherine Irwin  
 Carrie C. Lee  
 Danielle Lipow  
 Tony Madrigal  
 Tracy McClard  
 Danielle McDonald, Ph.D.  
 Merry Morash  
 Rep. Alisha Morgan  
 Sandy Mullins  
 Daniel Murrie, PhD  
 Pedro Noguera  
 Maureen Pacheco  
 Bob Sheil  
 Jeffrey James Shook  
 Chris Sturgis  
 Asha Sutton

In addition to the letter asking for the removal of youth from adult facilities, CFYJ and several other children's advocacy organizations (Center for Children's Law and Policy, Children's Defense Fund, First Focus, Juvenile Law Center, National Juvenile Defender Center, The Equity Project, and Youth Law Center) submitted a comprehensive analysis of the draft DOJ regulations with recommendations for a broader set of protections to combat the sexual abuse of youth held in juvenile facilities. Both the sign-on letter and the comprehensive comments can be viewed online at: <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/federal-law/60.html>.

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## **RESEARCH AND POLICY**

### **Justice Policy Institute Releases International Report**

The Justice Policy Institute released a new report comparing criminal justice policies from around the world. The report includes a brief comparison of juvenile incarceration statistics. According to their calculations, the United States holds almost six times as many children in detention as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Finland combined.

Further analysis shows that other nations focus more on rehabilitation and other pro-social options, while the United States still places too much emphasis on incarceration. The report calls on the United States to address the issue by adopting a care-first model, raising the age of criminal responsibility, and ending the transfer of youth to adult courts.

Follow the link to read the full report:

[http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/finding\\_direction-full\\_report.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/finding_direction-full_report.pdf)

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## Misplaced Priorities

This month, the NAACP Smart and Safe Campaign has released a new report, "Misplaced Priorities: Over Incarcerate, Under Educate." The report compares the differences between state and local spending on education and on incarceration and details how the increase in spending on prisons and detention facilities has negatively impacted spending on schools and educational programs. According to the report, prison spending has grown six times as fast as spending on higher education over the past twenty years at the state level. Furthermore, as states tightened budgets during the recent recession, many slashed education funding while simultaneously increasing the amount spent on prisons. The NAACP report indicates that these misplaced priorities disproportionately impact people of color, people with mental health issues, and people with a history of under- or unemployment.

The NAACP has a number of suggestions for correcting this problem, including additional study, increased support for youth educational programs, and reform of sentencing and drug policies.

The full report is available at: <http://www.naacp.org/pages/misplaced-priorities>.

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## NATIONAL MOMENTUM

### American Jail Association: Signatory of the National Resolution

In this month's edition of the newsletter, the Campaign would like to highlight the American Jail Association, one of over 190 signatories of the National Resolution.

In highlighting why the American Jail Association (AJA) signed on to the National Resolution against trying youth as adults, Executive Director Gwyn Smith-Ingley notes that "while [it] was not actively involved, AJA was honored to sign on in support of the Resolution..." because the Resolution is "consistent with [its] long-held position regarding juveniles in jail."

The AJA considers juvenile justice reform to be an important issue as it "supports effective public policy at all levels," such as "evidenced-based practices and criminal justice reinvestment initiatives" involving juvenile justice reform and the removal of youth from adult jails. Further indicating the organization's devotion to the issue of juvenile justice reform, Smith-Ingley states that upon signing the National Resolution, "We circulated it among our distribution list of all jails as well as through our magazine and website." She adds, "When I receive inquiries about juvenile in jails, I refer them to...the Campaign for Youth Justice."

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in Cincinnati, Ohio, the AJA will host its 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Training Conference and Jail Expo. During this conference, the organization will conduct a workshop entitled, "Jailing Juveniles and the Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act," which will feature efforts in Virginia to remove youth from adult jails. They will also present eight hours of Legal Issues on May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> during which, Smith-Ingley says, "various elements of managing juveniles in jails will be discussed." In these sessions, the AJA hopes to "engage attendees in a dialogue of juvenile justice reform, and advance[e] the discussion of evidence-based practice and justice reinvestment in the youth arena, as well as shar[e] resources for new avenues of information sharing."

For additional information, visit: <http://www.aja.org/conference/default.aspx>

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## National Resolution Sign On

If your organization has not signed on to the National Resolution, please consider doing so today. To sign-on to the Resolution, contact the Campaign at [jjstate@cfyj.org](mailto:jjstate@cfyj.org).

The text of the National Resolution and list of current signatories is available at:

[http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/National\\_Resolution\\_plus\\_supporters\\_2\\_25\\_11.pdf.pdf](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/National_Resolution_plus_supporters_2_25_11.pdf.pdf).

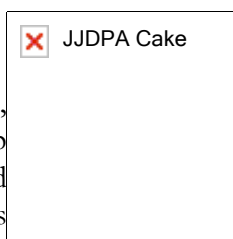
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## MEDIA WRAP

### Profiting from Abuse: One Parent Speaks Out

This month on *Juvenile Justice Matters*, we sat down with Mississippi parent Mike McIntosh, founder of "Friends and Family of Youths Incarcerated at Walnut Grove" - a support group created in the hopes of bringing together individuals whose loved ones are currently housed in the nation's largest juvenile prison. Mike was gracious enough to talk to us about his son's harrowing experience at the facility, and how it has inspired him to defend others against the threat of similar injustices.

What was supposed to be a normal day of visitation for Mike turned into a frantic five-and-a-half-week search for his son, who was incarcerated at the age of 18. During the time he was missing, Walnut Grove provided Mike with no information about the whereabouts of his son or why he had been removed from the facility. As Mike said, "the system kept hiding him." But Mike eventually discovered the disturbing truth of why Walnut Grove had worked so hard to keep Mike from finding him.



After more than a month of tireless searching, Mike finally managed to track his son down to the intensive care unit of a local hospital. Mike chillingly recalled, "I didn't even recognize his voice." His son's injuries were extensive: he had numerous fractures in his face, he was unable to walk or to talk, and the boy was barely able to recognize his own father from just feet away. While Mike was desperate for answers, his son couldn't provide any due to the brain damage and amnesia he had suffered. As for Walnut Grove, they simply refused to provide Mike with an explanation.

"I still haven't even heard a statement of what actually happened," Mike told *Juvenile Justice Matters*. When asked whether he has at least received an apology from the facility for the trauma his son was forced to endure, Mike said, "Absolutely not."

Walnut Grove is currently in the midst a federal investigation concerning what has been described as habitual mistreatment of inmates by correctional officers. The accusations range from physical and verbal abuse to such atrocities as guards betting on fights between inmates and engaging in the narcotics trade within the facility.

"The Grove," as it is commonly referred to by inmates, has come under heightened scrutiny as evidence has surfaced that it has become more of a cash cow than a rehabilitation facility. What was once a juvenile prison which housed only young offenders has become one of the only facilities in the country which houses 22-year-olds with 13-year-olds. Why the increase in inmate age limitations? Many have speculated that the residents of the town of Walnut Grove are willing to ignore the obvious danger of housing men with young boys because "The Grove" has become a profitable operation, accounting for nearly 15% of the town's annual revenue.

Mike McIntosh and his group will continue to demand answers from and fight against the facility which left his son "unable to even open a bottle of soda." "We're not going anywhere until something can be done," Mike triumphantly told *Juvenile Justice Matters*. "Keep reaching out, and let it be known because if you don't, they'll keep sweeping it under the rug... [t]hey're not going to change the system if nobody speaks out."

To listen to the full interview with Mike McIntosh, please visit [www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters).

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## GET ORGANIZED

### Organizing Ourselves: Cooperation is the Key to Success

By Grace Bauer

*Grace Bauer, a field organizer, joined the Campaign for Youth Justice in 2008. She has worked to unite the parents and allies of children to change laws and practices that result in children being prosecuted and confined as adults.*

 grace

#### Organizing To Do More

I am always talking to all of you about organizing others, but I would like to talk about organizing ourselves, as the families of friends of youth in the justice system, a little differently and hopefully better.

As many of you may know, the first week of April, the Campaign took on the task of getting 500 signatures for a set of regulations for the Prisoner Rape Elimination Act, PREA for short. I am happy to report that we did get over 1300 hundred signatures and that should have the effect that we had hoped for, which was to show there was broad support for these recommendations from individuals and organizations across the country.

I would like to thank everyone who signed on and helped us spread the message far and wide. It was quite the feat to get what we did with so little time to work with. We were successful, and we should be proud of what we accomplished. Yet, there is never a time when we can rest on what we did last week and to add to that, we must always be asking ourselves the question, "How can we do more?" In hindsight, we could have done more. The "more" is what I want to talk to you about today.

We are at a moment in time where we have both evidence and economic factors on our side. States are floundering under huge debt and state governments are looking for a way to cut budgets that doesn't threaten to tick off the people that put them in office. Corrections budgets are now or will be soon on the potential chopping block. I feel strongly that this is our chance to pass sweeping legislation in every state to do away with prison beds.

This brings me to another problem we have amongst ourselves that we must rectify if we are going to do anything of value. We can't do this alone! We must start looking for our allies in every state. The PREA signatures can give us ideas of where to start, but the key word here is "Start!" We must expand our numbers!

Any time I have ever started a new organizing project, the first course of business is getting a list of people and their contact information. These are the people that are likely going to believe many of the same things that we do. Every state has at least a few advocacy groups working on prison reform, immigrant rights, death penalty, juvenile life without parole, mandatory minimums, mental health, disability rights, special education, human rights and civil rights. Each of these groups and the individuals that make them up are working hard on their issue. Sadly though we are all working apart from one another and missing the opportunity to band together and demand larger changes than what any of us have envisioned so far.

Miss Assata was one of the members of FFLIC that served as a mentor to the younger, less experienced parents. Her lesson to us was, "It's not about going to the Capitol, it's about how many you have with you when you get there." Sage advice for all of us. I know that many of you have been working on pieces of legislation this year: all good bills that would bring positive change. Yet for every good bill we bring, another few bad bills will go through in your states because many of you don't have the capacity to work on good bills and monitor and stop bad ones. We take one step forward if we win, but, in working alone, we also take several steps back each year. We can't achieve the change we need in the juvenile and adult criminal justice system at this pace.

If each of us in our home states could begin to gather with other families and the organizations working on the issues I mentioned above, we could become larger in mass and stronger in resources to achieve serious change. We would also be much better prepared to handle and use opportunities like the PREA recommendations when they happen. I know some of you are going to ask, "Why would these other groups care about this?" All of these other groups are working on human rights issues, just as we are. It is on each of us to step into what I consider a void in leadership on this and encourage others to see themselves as part of the human rights framework. All of the issues would be better served by banding together to show more strength.

What does this look like on the ground? You can start by simply looking around for who these other groups are. Check the sign-on list of PREA signatures and see if any of the organizations on the list are in your state or if they have an affiliate in your state. Secondly, look online by simply googling some of the above mentioned issues along with your state or city name. When you find them, find out if they have public meetings and go. This is one of the best ways to network. Have a notebook with you to get their contact information. Tell others what you are working on and keep in mind you are working from the human rights framework so any group defending human rights are likely allies. They may not realize this yet, but you will have your chance to educate them. Most groups will likely not take on your issue by putting their slim resources into it, but many will be happy to support your issue by allowing you space to talk about it and sharing your message through their Listservs and other contacts.

I also would like to talk about how this could have dramatically changed the number of signatures we were able to obtain for the PREA recommendations. If every member of the National Parent Caucus had a list of 50 like-minded people in their state they could have sent the request to with a little personal note, we could have had over 13,000 signatures in the same amount of time. Note the mention of a personal note here. The best work in this business comes through personal relationships. I could have sent this to a thousand people who don't know me, and I would have been very lucky to get back 100 signatures. Yet, if the person receives it with a little note that says, "Hi there Gina, how are you?" "Listen this request is about stopping the rape and sexual assault of kids across this country and as you know Corey is in jail right now and this is a constant worry for me." "It only takes a minute to hit reply and add your name to the list." Because Gina knows Corey and me and it only takes a minute, I am very likely to get her signature.

Another good idea is to be a part of other group's Listservs. For those of you who are not able to go out and find others, spend a little time online trying to find like-minded groups and join their Listservs. If every one of us were a part of a Listserv or two and got the message out that way, we could have gotten well over 20,000 signatures. I will be brief on this last point, but I would be leaving out an important tool if I failed to mention the social media that most of us are using today. The average person on Facebook has 130 friends, and if you got 100 of those to sign and shared it with 100 of their friends, we could have obtained hundreds of thousands of signatures. Tunisia and Egypt are fine examples of just how powerful these tools can be when we understand how they can be used as social change agents.

As you can see, with just a small amount of effort we can expand our reach and build our capacity to take action. Would you like to talk about how you can do this in your state? Give us a call at the Campaign and let us help!

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## VOICES

*Francis went to adult prison at age 15. He is now 24 years old.*

*This is his story...*

My father died in a car accident when I was only 5. My mother raised three older brothers and an older sister by herself, pretty much. Not too long after, a step-father came into the picture. Abuse came as well to all kids: physical and mental. I hated coming home from school. I soon started feeling pulled toward a father figure to follow, to look up to. My older brothers pushed me away, and I ended up shadowing the local wrong crowd. I started using meth at age 13, pretty much every day because it was easy access. I ended up being sent to camp for eight or nine months the first time I was arrested for anything.

At 15 I was picked up for a probation violation, facing 18 months in CYA [California Youth Authority]. Instead...I was found guilty as an adult.

I am now 24. I feel alone, hopeless, forgotten and fading on the inside. I feel that my life is over. I am scared to dream beyond the walls, steel and concrete world I call home.

You feel that you have to do certain things in this environment. You feel an enormous amount of pressure to go along, to conform to ways set before you. When you are surrounded by ones that are more than [twice] your age...it doesn't help either when you truly feel hopeless because of the time you have been sentenced to. Mind tells you, 'this is it; this is my home.' Heart tells you, 'I don't want to live like this, be like this.'

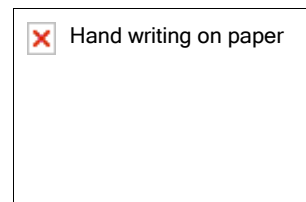
I was a teenager and on drugs, my mind was not even mine. I did not feel loved. I know this is no excuse for the vice I've committed and that I must be punished for it. But for the rest of my life?...I still shed tears at night. I am not the same person. I never will be.

### Eyes Are Windows

*By Francis*

Eyes are windows to the soul.  
These eyes of mine, still producing falling tears.

For how long shall they show this soul's pain?  
I am alive, but fading.



I feel the numbness creeping.  
The smile I once carried upon this face lost.


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## ON THE CALENDAR

**Mark Your Calendars for some Upcoming Events!**

**May 8, 2011: Mother's Day**

Mother's Day was originally founded in the United States as a way to reestablish relationships between mothers and children whose families had been torn apart during the Civil War. Since then, Mother's Day has become a time when families across the country celebrate the bond of motherhood by showing Moms how important they are in their lives. Moms are showered with cards, gifts, flowers and affection from their children and families.

 Calendar dates

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## TAKE ACTION, SPREAD THE WORD

**Mother's Day for Parents of Incarcerated Youth**


Mother's Day reminds us that we were all once children. We have all needed guidance. We can all help mothers and children come together to celebrate this special day.

The Campaign has put together a Mother's Day Toolkit to give you some ideas on what you can do to celebrate Mother's Day and how you can help.

Click [here](#) for CFYJ's Mother's Day Toolkit on what you can do for Mother's Day:  
[http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/2011\\_Mothers\\_Day\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/2011_Mothers_Day_Toolkit.pdf)

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP

 13daysleft

### How You Can Help

Honor the mothers in your life by making a donation in their name to the Campaign for Youth Justice. Make a donation to the Campaign for Youth Justice to honor a mom in your life, and we will send her a Mother's Day card. Donate to a great cause, give someone special an unexpected gift, and eliminate the stress of last-minute shopping!

Click here to donate online:

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

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## CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

**Campaign Infrastructure: 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 part of your campaign strategy, you will need to set up a campaign "infrastructure" to help you achieve the goals for your campaign.

Here are a few key steps:

### **1) Communications Tools**

You will need a "list" of all the people you have been in touch with who support your campaign goals such as name, address, phone and email. Microsoft Excel is a great tool for keeping track of all this information. You will also need a cell phone with remote access to your emails. A laptop is also really helpful if you are traveling around the state a lot. Finally, you'll need a "listserv" so that you can send out updates from wherever you are in the state. Google and Yahoo offer free services on their websites.

### **2) Social Media Tools**

There are a lot of great social media tools you can utilize to get the word out about your campaign. Some of these are free and very user-friendly! Others will require resources and capacity to utilize effectively so before you set up these tools, give some thought to what you have the time and funding to do most effectively. Facebook is a great way to connect with people regularly about your campaign. Setting up a page is free and easy! A website or a blog is also a great tool to provide information on your campaign. YouTube, Twitter, and other social media sites are also good ways to get the word out about your campaign!

### **3) Weekly or Monthly Updates**

One way to keep everyone you've been in touch with engaged is to write a brief update weekly on your campaign listserv. You could share a new fact or piece of information about trying youth as adults. You could collect links to relevant news clips in your state for the week. Or you could include a personal story that someone has shared about how they have been impacted. Your network will start to expect a weekly (or monthly!) update from you once you start this, so think about your capacity first and whether to enlist volunteers to work with you on this piece.

#### **4) Take Action Tools**

As your campaign gets underway, you'll want to be sure to give your network a way to 'take action' on the issue! If you have a campaign plan with policy goals, setting up a direct action online can be done easily and at no cost! Check out the take action tools on [www.change.org](http://www.change.org)! You can set up your own alert and petition to go to policymakers in your state or at the federal level.

#### **5) Don't forget the old-fashioned phone call!**

With all the focus on technology, contact with our networks can become really impersonal and lose the personal connections between people. It is really important to talk to people and to meet in person whenever possible! Technology can help support maintaining the contacts, but it is not a substitute for personal contact.

*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. For previous articles, visit the campaign resource center at: <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/advocacy-resource-center.html>.*

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### **CFYJ WELCOMES NEW STAFF**

This semester we are excited to have the opportunity to work with an Offender Aid & Restoration (OAR) volunteer. OAR is a non-profit organization that works with the Superior Court of the District of Columbia to help youth on probation find community service placement sites in the North West area. Judges have seen huge potential in many of the children OAR serves and therefore have placed them on probation instead of incarcerating them.

Todd came to CFYJ as an OAR volunteer for the semester. In his five weeks here, he has helped disseminate over 500 *State Trends* reports and has been responsible for starting our Mother's Day card initiative. We are very thankful for all his help and hard work.

#### **Todd, OAR Volunteer**

My name is Todd, and I am 17 years old. I attend Luke C. Moore Academy Senior High School in Washington, DC. I was born and raised in Washington, DC. I love art and like to travel. I've been out of the country once before. I also like sports; I play basketball, baseball, and rugby. On my own time I write, but not that often. When I do write, I write to get away.

Lately, I have been working with Campaign for Youth Justice. I have been helping with administrative work. The Campaign helps juveniles that are locked up in adult facilities, and I was also locked up in an adult facility. Knowing that the Campaign is willing to help out juveniles in my situation made me willing to help them.

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#### **Justin Baker, Government Affairs Fellow**

Justin joins the Campaign for Youth Justice as the Government Affairs Fellow. After graduating from Yale University in 2008, he worked as a Field Organizer for the Obama campaign in Virginia. During this time, Justin worked with formerly incarcerated individuals to restore their voting rights. When the campaign concluded, Justin spent several months as a White House Associate before taking a job on Capitol Hill. As a Staff Assistant for Congresswoman Barbara Lee, he developed an understanding of the legislative process. He further refined this knowledge as a Clerk/Policy Analyst with the Domestic Policy Subcommittee on House Oversight and Government Reform. He will assist with the development of advocacy and outreach strategies directed towards state and federal government.

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