

CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

February 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



A Message from Yuval Sheer of the NYCJJ

One of the fights that inspired the establishment of the New York Center for Juvenile Justice is the plight of Qing Hong Wu. The Honorable Michael Corriero has recounted the story in an interview with Marion Mattingly which was published in the December/January 2011 issue of the **Juvenile Justice Update**. Here is what Judge Corriero had to say:

"About a year ago, after I had retired from the bench and while I was serving as Executive

Director of Big Brothers, I received an email from a young man, Qing Hong Wu. He reminded me that in 1996 when he was 14 years old, I sentenced him for a series of robberies that he was involved in along with a group of other youths and that I promised him at the time of his sentence that if he turned his life around, I would do all I could to stand behind him. He said to me, "Judge Corriero, I did exactly what you told me."

"He excelled at his studies, supported his family, found a good job, and stayed out of trouble. One day, he applied for US citizenship after his mother had shortly before received hers, but because of his criminal record, he was taken into custody, transported to an immigration detention center, held without bail, and was subject to mandatory deportation. Qing Hong Wu told me that he could not understand how after doing all the right things, he was suddenly in a position where he was about to be deported and lose everything he had. I didn't have a good answer. I was both proud of what he had accomplished and angry that he was in this position ... I decided that I would join the fight for Qing Hong Wu. I wrote a letter on his behalf urging the Governor to pardon him since he had done everything that the system expected of him. Nina Bernstein of the *New York Times* wrote of Qing's plight and the wide spread support he had in the community, including the judge who sentenced him. The story sparked a wave of public support for Qing Hong Wu. The Governor granted the pardon and today Qing Hong Wu is an American citizen."

For more information on the Qing Hong Wu case, please visit the New York Center for Juvenile Justice website at <http://www.nycjj.org>.



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FEDERAL UPDATE



The President's Budget Proposal on Juvenile Justice

The President's FY12 budget proposes a major restructuring of federal juvenile justice funding to the states and territories. While the proposal provides incentives for a small number of states to improve their juvenile justice systems, the proposal:

- Abandons federal support for the minimum protections in federal statute for more than three decades for the care and custody of children in the juvenile justice system in all states and territories;
- Reduces the access of most states to all current available federal resources to meet these minimum federal protections;
- Reduces the critical federal role in juvenile justice in ensuring minimum federal protections are maintained across the country and in serving as a catalyst for juvenile justice reforms;
- Runs counter to the Senate Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) reauthorization legislation supported by a bipartisan group of Senators; and

·Is inconsistent with other Administration "Race to the Top" initiatives.

To address these negative impacts, CFYJ and its allies are calling on the Administration to restructure the "Race to the Top-style Juvenile Justice Improvement Grant" in the President's FY12 budget by these actions:

- (1) Restructure the "Race to the Top-style Juvenile Justice Improvements Grant" by allocating 95% of the funds on a formula basis to all of the states;
- (2) Restructure the "Race to the Top-style Juvenile Justice Improvements Grant" by allocating 5% of the funds on a competitive basis for a select number of states to improve outcomes for vulnerable children;
- (3) Support the amendments in the Senate JJDP A reauthorization to substantially strengthen the minimum federal protections for children; and
- (4) Initiate administrative actions to accelerate the implementation of efforts to strengthen the minimum federal protections for children.

CFYJ is urging national, state and local organizations to sign up for a day to send a letter to the President. To sign up for the "Letter A Day" campaign and a template letter, contact Liz Ryan at lryan@cfyj.org.

For a copy of CFYJ's full statement, visit:

<http://www.youthtoday.org/doc/CFYJ%20Statement.pdf>

Restore Cuts in Juvenile Justice

The House passed Continuing Resolution (CR) proposes \$191 million in cuts to juvenile justice funding in the Department of Justice.

Juvenile justice programs strengthen the nation's juvenile justice system, and support prevention and early intervention programs that make a critical difference for young people and their communities, and contribute to the prevention and reduction of youth crime and violence.

These programs enable states and communities to improve the juvenile justice system so that it provides critical treatment and rehabilitative services, in safe conditions, that are tailored to the needs of youth and their families; protects public safety; and, holds youthful offenders accountable. This reduction will gut proven state and community juvenile justice intervention programs that localities have used to keep youth and families safe, and keep juvenile crime rates down.

As the Senate considers the House passed Continuing Resolution, it is urgent that juvenile justice funding is restored to ensure the protection of children from the dangers of adult jails, improve safety for youth in custody, and increase fairness in the justice system.

Please contact your Senators to urge them to support investing in effective juvenile crime prevention programs and protect youth in the juvenile justice system:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/tell-the-senate-restore-juvenile-justice-funding>.

Support the Family Justice Act

In the last Congress, the Family Justice Act of 2010, H.R. 6361, was introduced on September 29, 2010 and referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. We anticipate that the bill will soon be reintroduced in early 2011.

The Family Justice Act will provide necessary support and funding to better engage families in the juvenile justice system. The successful rehabilitation of youth is dependent on stable family structures and sustained reintegration into the community, which is more likely to be successful when the juvenile justice system and families involved work together.

If you agree that over-incarceration and practices that exclude youth and families from decision-making do not serve our youth or help make our communities safer, and if you agree that devoting more resources to effective juvenile justice programs including alternatives to detention, rehabilitative services, and family inclusion will better serve our communities, please contact your representatives and urge them to support the Family Justice Act: http://www.change.org/petitions/support_the_family_justice_act.

For additional information on the Family Justice Act, please visit:
<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/federal-law/59.html>.

Urge the Obama Administration to Appoint a Permanent OJJDP Administrator

It has been two years since President Obama was inaugurated and no permanent Administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has been appointed. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is the federal agency responsible for juvenile justice and delinquency prevention issues, and is tasked with assisting State and local governments in addressing juvenile delinquency.

Over the past decade, OJJDP suffered a drastic depletion of funding and support, and the agency's commitment to the most important issues confronting youth has diminished. It is crucial that the Administration provide leadership, clear direction and resources to assist States create and sustain juvenile justice systems that cost less, enhance public safety and treat court-involved youth appropriately.

If you believe that it is urgent to stop putting youth in adult jails and prisons, to end the over-incarceration of youth of color in the justice system, and instead to devote more resources to effective juvenile justice programs such as alternatives to detention and incarceration, please take action!

TO TAKE ACTION:

For individuals:

Please consider signing the petition below:

<http://www.change.org/petitions/make-juvenile-justice-a-priority-appoint-an-ojdp-administrator>.

For organizations:

Please consider signing onto the national, state & local organizational sign on letter on the OJJDP Administrator by emailing organizer@cfyj.org by March 31, 2011:

Dear President Obama,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and individuals, we are writing to urge you to make juvenile justice a priority by appointing a permanent Administrator to lead the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention.

As you enter the third year of your Administration, an entire community of juvenile justice professionals, and the young people and families we serve, remain without an Administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). OJJDP is the only federal agency responsible for federal leadership regarding juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, and it is also tasked with assisting State and local governments in grappling with these complex issues.

Over the past decade, OJJDP suffered a drastic depletion of funding and support, and the agency's ability to address the most important issues confronting youth crime and justice has necessarily diminished. It is crucial, and long overdue, that your Administration provide leadership, direction, cost-effective solutions and resources to assist States and communities across the nation as we enhance public safety, promote the rule of law, provide diversion and court-based services, operate detention and corrections facilities, and treat court-involved youth in accordance with developmentally sound principles and practices.

We stand ready to partner with your Administration to ensure a balanced and fair juvenile justice system, but we will not be able to advance or sustain progress without a strong and viable Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Please appoint a seasoned and experienced juvenile justice Administrator who can lead our country's juvenile justice system immediately.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Your Name/Organization

Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) Update

CFYJ applauds the thousands of individuals and organizations throughout the country who advocated for the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) in the past two congressional sessions. Congress wrapped up the 111th Congress with no further action on the JJDP A.

The 112th Congress has convened and during this session, Congress can and should use the reauthorization of the JJDP A as an opportunity to strengthen accountability for federal spending, and help States protect children in the justice system, providing rehabilitation services. Since the last substantive reauthorization of the JJDP A nearly two decades ago, much more is known about what works and does not work to keep our communities safe and put youth on a better path.

Congress should introduce and approve JJDP A reauthorization legislation in this session that includes the priorities of the juvenile justice field, such as:

- Extend the jail removal and sight and sound separation core protections to all youth under the age of 18 held pretrial, whether charged in juvenile or adult court.
- Codify current State flexibility for housing youth convicted in adult court in juvenile facilities rather than adult prisons by modifying the definition of "adult inmate."
- Strengthen the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) core protection by requiring States to take concrete steps to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.
- Strengthen the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) core protection, which prohibits the locked detention of status offenders, by removing the Valid Court Order (VCO) and Interstate Compact exceptions.
- Provide safe and humane conditions of confinement for youth in State or local custody by restricting use of JJDP A funds for dangerous practices and encouraging States to adopt best practices and standards while eliminating dangerous practices and unnecessary isolation.

Stay tuned for updates on the JJDP A during the 112th Congress!

For additional information on the JJDP A and to learn about ways to get involved, visit: www.act4jj.org.

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RESEARCH AND POLICY

Recommendations Released to the Obama Administration, Congress

On February 11, 2011, the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition (NJJDPC) released recommendations addressing much-needed policy and administrative advances to President Obama's Administration and Members of the 112th Congress. Top priorities include:

- Swift appointment of a permanent administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP);
- Reauthorizing the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A);
- Ensuring that implementation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) meets the needs of detained youth.

The NJJDPC Coalition's recommendations are based on the consensus of more than 50 national organizations working on youth development, juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, including a broad range of practitioners and advocates from faith-based groups, education organizations, research organizations, and prevention-oriented law enforcement organizations. The National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition (NJJDPC) brings together a collaborative array of youth- and family- serving, social justice, law enforcement, corrections, and faith-based organizations, that work to ensure healthy families, build strong communities and improve public safety by promoting fair and effective policies, practices and programs for youth involved or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

We extend special recognition to Neelum Arya, Research & Policy Director for the Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ), and Jill Ward, Consultant to CFYJ, for authoring these two documents and we would also like to acknowledge the many NJJDPC members who contributed their time, expertise and counsel. Finally, we appreciate those members of the NJJDPC Steering Committee who helped to edit the final documents and shepherd this project to completion.

Press Release:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/Press%20Release%20-%20NJJDPC%20Recommendations-FINAL.pdf>.

Recommendations to the Obama Administration:

http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/NJJDPC_Opportunities%20for%20the%20Obama%20administration.pdf.

Recommendations to Congress:

http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/NJJDPC_Opportunities%20for%20Congress.pdf.

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NATIONAL MOMENTUM

National Resolution Sign On Update

Roger Ghatt

The Campaign for Youth Justice continues to promote its national resolution to reduce the number of youth sent to adult criminal court and to remove youth from adult jails and prisons.

In this month's edition of the newsletter, the Campaign would like to highlight the United Methodist Church, one of the over 185 signatories of the National Resolution.

As with all organizations who sign on to the National Resolution against Trying Youth as Adults, the United Methodist Church did so for specific reasons. According to Bill Mefford, Director of Civil and Human Rights at the United Methodist Church, the Church believes "God has [a] special concern for youth and children", and it is the public's responsibility to ensure that youth have the opportunity to rehabilitate and become productive contributors to society. Furthermore, the Church "know[s] that trying and incarcerating youth in adult jails and prisons only places youth at [a] greater risk of harm..." It is the firm belief of the United Methodist Church that "youth should be treated as youth in and out of the criminal justice system."

There is no better example of the United Methodist Church's devotion to the cause of juvenile justice than its participation in the upcoming Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing, which will run between March 7th and March 13th across the nation. The purpose of this week is to provide an opportunity for churches and faith communities to publicly express their concern for youth in the criminal justice system in, as Mefford says, "both a worshipful and politically meaningful way." Church leaders will devote part or all of their worship services during this week to youth in the system to communicate to leaders that faith communities are very much concerned about and interested in the issue. They will

pray for leaders to pass related legislation such as the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. Not only does the Church plan to make the National Resolution their focus this week, but also they will host coordinated prayer events on March 7th in juvenile detention facilities, such as New Beginnings in Laurel, Maryland and in Los Angeles. The United Methodist Church hopes that other faith communities with connections to juvenile detention facilities will use this day to host similar events or educate their communities about youth justice issues.

The United Methodist Church anticipates the involvement of many United Methodist churches around the country and urges other faith communities to participate in the Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing. For more information about the Week and the juvenile justice system, or to register for the event, please visit:

http://www.healingjusticecoalition.org/juvenile_justice_week.html.

We would like to thank Bill Mefford, Director of Civil and Human Rights on the General Board of Church and Society at the United Methodist Church, for his dedication to young people in the justice system and their families.

We are pleased to report that over 185 organizations have signed the Resolution! To build on this tremendous support, we hope to gain signatories in all 50 states. Dozens of states have already signed, but the states of Alaska, Kansas, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Utah are still not represented. To help reach this goal, we need your help!

If your organization has not signed on to the Resolution, or it knows of a potentially interested organization in one of the above listed states, please contact the Campaign at jjstate@cfyj.org.

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

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/national%20resolution%20plus%20supporters%2009%2028%2010.pdf>.

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MEDIA WRAP

"Me Facing Life: Cyntonia's Story"

This month on Juvenile Justice Matters, we were joined by Ellenette Brown, adoptive mother of Cyntonia Brown, a young woman who is currently serving a life sentence for a crime she committed when she was just 16 years old. We were also joined by Daniel H. Birman, director of "Me Facing Life: Cyntonia's Story."



Cyntonia Brown was born to a mother suffering from alcoholism who readily admitted to drinking heavily during pregnancy, and born into a biological family which was plagued by a long history of physical abuse and mental disorders. Still an infant, Cyntonia was adopted by Ellenette Brown, but was unable to escape a childhood which was marred by both physical and sexual abuse. At age 16, Cyntonia was forced to prostitute herself by a man who refers to himself as "Kutt Throat," who had been serving as Cyntonia's violent pimp.

One night, as Cyntonia lay in the bed with a strange man, she thought he was reaching for a gun. Fearing for her life, she killed him.

Mr. Birman's film, "Me Facing Life: Cyntonia's Story," documents the events which unfolded following the incident. He follows Cyntonia and the Brown family through the hearing and sentencing process, gets candid interviews with Cyntonia and both her adoptive and biological mothers, as well as interviewing medical experts who testify that it is very difficult to hold Cyntonia completely responsible for her actions considering the circumstances surrounding the incident and Cyntonia's disturbing childhood.

When we asked Dan what motivated him to create a film like this, he informed us that "[The issue] of juvenile violence is gigantic...That year, when Cyntonia was arrested, she wasn't alone. That caused me to stop and really think about our own perceptions about violence, our own perceptions about youth, and how those things come together. Because quite frankly, I don't think they're single random acts. I think they're a result of something else."

Ellenette feels that "this is a story that needs to be told." During the show, Ellenette provides us with a gripping account of a mother's struggle to connect with a daughter whose past strained their relationship, and her attempts to make sense of a corrections system which felt it necessary to put her away for life.

"Me Facing Life: Cyntonia's Story," which premieres on PBS on March 1, forces us to reevaluate the current discourse of juvenile justice in the United States. It takes a hard look at the system which felt that Cyntonia Brown, a troubled young woman whose killing was fear based and not premeditated, had to be tried as an adult and consequently locked away for the rest of her life. Birman and Ellenette hope the film will inspire others to consider the barbaric way we are treating our youth. Birman remarks "If we can open up a dialogue so that one child, one mother, one father might think differently about their actions, haven't we done something good?"

To listen to this and many other archived shows, please visit www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters.

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GET ORGANIZED

Are We Missing an Opportunity for Change?

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.



Each month as the deadline approaches to turn in our newsletter articles, I rack my brain trying to figure out what it is I can say that will be of the most benefit for the readers. Sometimes, I get lucky and hit on something people can use, sometimes, I just ramble and the article serves no one. By far, the most responses I have ever received about any one article came from our January newsletter. For over a month, I have

pondered what that meant. Is it that no one is interested in the pieces I write about doing the work? I don't think so. I think when I send out articles about the work people take what they can from it and do what needs to be done.

The last article was about our personal lives and I believe folks responded in mass because they saw a fellow human being in need and reached out to hold me and my family. I also believe that for the first time feelings that have long been hidden were all of sudden in black and white, for all to see. Folks wanted to say they, too, had felt the loneliness and isolation of having a child incarcerated and to let me know I wasn't alone in my grief. I, never, for one moment believed I was! Over the past 6 weeks, I have received numerous calls and countless emails. I believe we are healing because of the love, support and care that so many of you have provided. There are no words to say how much every card, letter, email, text message and call has meant to me. Please know that it is from your strength that I continue to fight!

I went to see my son, in another jail, in a different state yet I found the same thing I always find in these places. They allowed families and friends in to the visiting area 10 at a time. Not surprising, I was one of two white families, in a state where white folks make up almost 64% of the total population. Many folks in this country choose to ignore the facts and research but for those of us that aren't too afraid to see, disproportionate minority contact and confinement is a problem of huge proportions in the "good ole U.S.A." Sadly most white folks are still blaming it on the people rather than looking at the leadership and policies of this "great nation."

Out of those ten young people, on the other side of the glass, not one appeared to be over 25 years old. I looked and saw babies looking back at me. *You can't cry here, I tell myself. I don't but it takes all I have not to.* For days before this visit, I had to psych myself up. I keep wondering what it is I will say, how he will look and if I have the strength to walk down another hallway to find my son in shackles, chains and the neon orange jump suit. *I have no choice I must find him and I do, another baby in an orange jumpsuit, 3 sizes too large, looking back at me.*

As a mother, you have to force yourself to look closely because you must assess their physical state. Is he clean, is he hurt, is he getting enough to eat, is he O.K. mentally, and is he 24? *In the nights between his arrest and this visit, I dream every night that he is a little boy again, riding his bike with his wild red hair blowing in the wind and then, in the twilight of dreams, he is seven and in a cell.* His usually short hair is already growing shaggy and the prison staple orange jumpsuit swallows his body and the collar hugs the tops of his ears, his shoulders are hunched and in that moment it is hard to believe he is 24.

How are you? My first question for today's visit and for all the phone calls we will exchange in the near future but long before he answers, I always answer it for myself, *"How the hell do you think he is?"* My sarcasm, to ease the blow of his standard answer, "I'm O.K." *"There is nothing, absolutely nothing, O.K. here, not you, not me, not this place, not this world!"* You can't ever say those things because as much as I draw on the strength of all of you, he draws on my strength.

I am hurt but I don't really feel angry, yet when I open my mouth, I say "I don't think you understand the sorrow you have caused your sister and I." Before the words have traversed the phone line, I am sorry. I see him sink even further down into the jumpsuit and I see his

face fall. That's what most people can believe about Corey but I gave birth to him, have watched him grow, have watched him try and fail and on too many days I have watched him cry, I know better. This is a part of what we have been taught in this country, if you are in jail you deserve to be there and the rest of us can turn our heads and hearts and ignore what happens to you. But I know better, I know him and I know what caused this awful mess that we are now in, together. I will not turn my back on him and I will not turn my head or heart from his suffering.

He would rather see me angry than hurt. He says, "You didn't support me." I know that I have in every way possible. He says, "You didn't hear me when I told you I was struggling." I know that I did. *How much longer can this 30 minute visit last?* We lapse into conversation, not really saying anything but for today it's O.K. because we are both still here, to sit on our respective sides of the glass. Mothers have to be thankful for the opportunity to sit next to a child who has been down this long and extremely dangerous road and I am.

I leave the facility, head down, tears flowing. I can't see to drive so I sit in the darkened underground garage and cry. *Why did you say that? He is in enough pain, why did I do like the others and add to it? Why is this, our lives?* When I get my emotions under control, I drive home to cry more on my partner's shoulder. This day is gone.

This day may be gone but there are others ahead, ones filled with hope. I always love the quote "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing." A quote from Arundhati Roy, a well-known Indian novelist and activist. I leave you with one other thought: Today Egypt is a free democracy, yesterday it wasn't. Egypt didn't change because we cried, it changed because many were willing to step up and challenge! Are you willing?

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VOICES

Ray went to adult prison at age 16. Now he is trying to participate in outreach programs to keep other youth from having to go through what he has experienced. This is his story...



In elementary school, Ray was sent to live with his grandfather and his wife with five children in a one room house. His mother was hospitalized and unable to care for him due to injuries suffered from being hit by a drunk driver. Ray recalls, "This time of my life all I remember is the hand-me-downs and hearing 'you're not my son' over and over again."

A few years later, although Ray was able to live with his mother, she had become abusive and suffered from panic attacks due to the stress of living out of cars and in abandoned houses. Soon Ray turned to gangs and street life, and by age 12 he had left his mother to live on his own with drug dealers. His trouble with the law began with minor incidents of stealing and selling drugs. However, these became more violent and eventually landed Ray in prison at age 16 for [an incident] he committed with a 38-year-old, 3-time felon who was given probation while Ray received a maximum sentence. While Ray does not blame his incarceration on anyone and believes he should have been punished for his actions, he says that what he has experienced has been excessive for a crime committed as a juvenile.

"I have lost the last 19 years of life...not being productive in society and [this] conviction will deny me of many job opportunities [when I am released]... Being here so long I've become seriously accustomed to prison life, and living under day-to-day threat of violence... [Experiencing these evils of the world as a youth we] begin to accept violence as a reality of life... Prisoners like me have more time spent behind gates and under guns than in the free world, which has really taken a toll on us... I have lost everything while here, a place where any weakness is an invitation for violence or victimization by others."

Despite these painful experiences, Ray has spent his time in prison becoming involved in outreach programs to help keep at-risk youth out of the system. "What I have been doing is coming together with other inmates with similar histories in an attempt to reach out to the youth and get them to seriously understand the consequences of this life. I seriously think we can help a few avoid the prison system. For many of us here this has become a personal investment, because we have children and family members that we don't want as cellmates or mentally damaged like we are. Hopefully we can use our incarceration to help others [because] we have seen, heard, and personally been involved in things that no person, let alone our children, should experience... At this point I am hopeful to help others avoid this situation, and that I can find a way to release [these feelings] in a positive way."

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DWAYNE'S COLUMN



An advocate for juvenile justice and prison reform, Dwayne Betts is a national spokesperson for the Campaign for Youth Justice. He was sentenced to nine years in prison for carjacking when he was sixteen years old. Today, Betts is a father, husband, advocate, educator, and accomplished author.

On A&E's community board a woman posts, "this show will save our children." Another woman turns to the show out of desperation, looking for something to reach her two teenage children, troubled by the death of their father. There are only three comments on the message board, but judging by the number of viewers who tuned in to watch A&E's *Beyond Scared Straight*, it seems many share this sentiment. More likely though, A&E has just tapped into America's latest obsession with the Scared Straight phenomenon. Back in the early 90s when mid-morning talk shows were the only reality television, you would find various versions of A&E's *Beyond Scared Straight*. You would find boot camps and screaming inmates in the faces of young children, and you would find a live studio audience soaking it all up, getting into shouting matches with irate children and praising the techniques of whatever program was featured.

Our parents and young people are fortunate today to have advocates that are able to demystify the criminal justice system. The fight to shut down A&E's *Beyond Scared Straight*, is being led by organizations that understand what works to rehabilitate young people and maybe more importantly has taken issue with the lives of troubled young people being turned into entertainment. When the Campaign for Youth Justice started the petition against A&E's *Beyond Scared Straight*, it was with reports from the Coalition of Juvenile Justice, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, and a number of other credible sources disputing the effectiveness of these scared straight programs.

In the end, we have to ask ourselves if we are after entertainment or good public policy. Since the petition began California and Maryland have pulled their Scared Straight program, opting instead to follow federal law and the public statement of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention that call for sight and sound separation between juvenile and adult offenders. When Geraldo, Ricky Lake and Montel Williams were staples on morning television, the stakes weren't nearly as high as they are now. A&E's *Beyond Scared Straight* holds a position on prime time television and is pulling a large number of viewers who have no idea how damaging and ineffective these programs are. It is essential that we respond now, both by signing the Campaign's petition at Change.org and telling our friends and family members about how ineffective these programs are, and how regardless of what is shown on the television screen, these programs lead to little more than another jail cell for the young faces that stare meekly and defiantly at us from the screen.

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ON THE CALENDAR

Mark Your Calendars for some Upcoming Events!

March 7-13, 2011: Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing

Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing is an annual event that unites congregations of all faith traditions, high schools and universities in California to raise awareness of individual, community, and social needs arising from the current juvenile justice system. The week is a time to open our hearts and minds through prayer, education, service, and advocacy. The events through the week will initiate a dialogue between offenders, victims, and the community regarding the causes of crime and will suggest structures needed to prevent youth from becoming engaged in the cycle of violence. The long term goal of Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing is to offer young offenders hope and alternatives to a lifetime as a hardened criminal, while society implements more fully the principles of restorative justice. Participate in Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing with your prayers, service, and/or action at your place of worship, school or university.



Click here for Ten Things You Can Do:

[http://www.healingjusticecoalition.org/documents/Ten Things You Can Do.pdf](http://www.healingjusticecoalition.org/documents/Ten_Things_You_Can_Do.pdf)

For more information contact:

Javier Stauring at (310)920-4216 or insidecjh@aol.com.

March 7, 2011: Juvenile Justice Interfaith Prayer Vigil

Where: New Beginnings Youth Development Center
8400 River Road
Laurel, MD 20724

Time: 7:00 pm

RSVP: Contact Laura Downton, M.Div at ldownton@umc-gbcs.org

The youth at New Beginnings will gather for an interfaith prayer vigil to kick off the Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing, March 7-13, 2011, a week designed to unite congregations of all faith traditions to raise awareness of the individual, community and

social needs arising from the current juvenile justice system. On Monday, March 7th an interfaith prayer service will be taking place at a juvenile facility in Southern California, coordinated by Javier Stauring and the Healing Justice Coalition. We will gather in solidarity with them on the east coast, so that both coasts are represented.

For more information contact:

Laura Downton, M.Div (202) 495-2956 ~ ldownton@umc-gbcs.org

March 10, 2011: Defending Childhood: A Symposium on the Prosecution of Children in Adult Courts

Where: Double Tree Hotel
1775 E. Cheyenne Mountain Blvd
Colorado Springs, CO 80911

Time: 7:00 pm

RSVP: Contact Francoise Mbabazi at francoise@cjdc.org

The Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition is pleased to host "Defending Childhood: A Symposium on the Prosecution of Children in Adult Courts" on March 10th in Colorado Springs, CO with keynote speaker R. Dwayne Betts.

R. Dwayne Betts is the recipient of the 2010 NAACP Image Award for Literary Debut and a 2010 Soros Justice Media Fellowship, Betts is an advocate for juvenile justice and prison reform. Author of the memoir, A Question of Freedom, and the poetry collection Shahid Reads His Own Palm, Betts is a national spokesperson for the Campaign for Youth Justice. He has been profiled in The Washington Post, USA Today, The Baltimore Sun and appeared on CNN, NPR, the Tavis Smiley Show and other media outlets.

For more information contact:

Francoise Mbabazi (303)825-0194 ~ francoise@cjdc.org

March 15, 2011: Children's Advocacy Day

Where: NC General Assembly
16 West Jones St.
Raleigh, NC 27601

Time: 9:00 am

RSVP: Contact Mandy Ableidinger at mandy@ncchild.org

Action for Children, the Covenant with North Carolina's Children, NC MomsRising, the NC Pediatric Society, and others will join forces for a day of educating the General Assembly on the importance of children's programs and services.

Juvenile justice funding, health insurance, child care subsidies, infant mortality prevention and more are all under threat this session. We need YOU to come out in support of the programs and services that protect our children's health and safety every day. Children did not create the current budget crisis and they should not have to shoulder the burden of solving it. Come out to tell your legislators about the children's programs and services that matter to you.

For more information contact:

Mandy Ableidinger (919)834-6623 ~ mandy@ncchild.org ~ www.ncchild.org

April 15-17, 2011: Global Youth Service Day

Global Youth Service Day is an annual campaign that celebrates and mobilizes the millions of children and youth who improve their communities each day of the year through service and service-learning. Established in 1988, Global Youth Service Day is the largest service event in the world, and the only day of service dedicated to children and youth. GYSD is celebrated each year in over 100 countries.

Each year, millions of children and youth around the world work together with schools, youth organizations, nonprofits, community and faith-based organizations, volunteer and national service programs, government agencies, faith communities, and other individuals to address the world's most critical issues and change their communities on Global Youth Service Day.

For more information contact:

www.GYSD.org.

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TAKE ACTION, SPREAD THE WORD**Postcard Campaign:**

At http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/parent_tools.html you can download postcard templates or create one to fit your message. Using postcards to spread a message can produce good results in a small amount of time. Unlike letters, which are often thrown away without even being opened, post cards can be easily read and passed on to others. Postcard campaigns are inexpensive, effective, and easy.

The following are some basic guidelines to conducting an effective postcard campaign:

Step 1: *Consider your target audience.*

Will this postcard be sent to legislators or the general public? What kind of information will be best suited for informing this audience?

Step 2: *Develop a message.*

Remember that postcards are relatively small, so you will need to make it succinct. Nobody will bother to read an entire novel squeezed onto a single card. A few large words of text will suffice. If you have any trouble getting your message onto the card provide these files to your local Kinko's and they should be able to assist you.

Step 3: *Send your postcard to a professional printing company* (e.g. Kinko's or an online printer).

Send them your design and ask them to print it onto high-quality postcards. The printer will address the postcards if you provide a mailing list in an excel spreadsheet.

Otherwise you will need to print labels from your computer and affix them to the postcard.

Step 4: *Send postcards out to target group, in a timely manner.*

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HOW YOU CAN HELP**How You Can Help**



We Need Your Help to Launch Grassroots Campaigns!

We are encouraged by the recent wins in a number of the states in 2010 and the momentum must continue! With your help, we can expand grassroots campaigns on the ground in new states to show support for reform to reduce the prosecution of youth in adult criminal court and to end the placement of youth in adult jails and prisons.

Help us launch campaigns in new states in 2010 by donating \$5, \$50, or \$500!

To donate, click here:

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

Let's work together to stop the inhumane, unjust, and ineffective policies affecting youth across the country!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

Getting People Engaged: A Campaign Approach to Ending the Practice of Prosecuting Youth as Adults

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."

Now that you've engaged people in your campaign, it is time to think about mapping out your campaign strategy. Here are a few key steps:

1) Utilize a campaign strategy planning chart

One of the most effective ways to plan a campaign is by utilizing a campaign strategy "planning chart." A sample campaign strategy planning chart is in "Families in Power: Family Guide to Networking, Coalition Building, Organizing & Campaign Planning" available online at:

http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/CFYJ_FamGuide.pdf.

2) Learn more about campaign planning

An excellent resource is the "Organizing for Social Change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists" that includes a step-by-step guide on campaign planning. For additional information about this resource, visit: <http://www.midwestacademy.com/midwest-academy-manual>. The Midwest Academy also offers intensive campaign organizing training. For more information, visit: <http://www.midwestacademy.com/>.

3) Read up about successful campaigns

To get a sense of what it takes to plan a successful campaign, it can be helpful to read about other campaign efforts. For some information on successful "transfer reform" efforts, visit: <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/advocacy-resource-center/state-legislative-options.html>. Also, a terrific resource on juvenile justice reform campaigns is "No Turning Back" available online at: http://www.cclp.org/documents/BBY/ntb_fullreport.pdf.

4) Talk to other campaign organizers

A good way to get a sense of how to plan a successful campaign is to talk to other people who've done it. You can get good insights from people who've worked on successful "transfer reform" campaigns as well as others who've managed successful campaigns on many other social justice issues. For a list of "transfer reform" contacts, visit: <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/parents-resource-center/find-your-state-contacts.html>.

5) Organize a brainstorming session

One of the best ways to map out your campaign strategy is to organize a brainstorming session with your group. Bring the tools and information you have learned about to your session. Set an objective for the session, such as establishing mutually agreed upon goals for your campaign. To inspire your group, consider sharing information from other successful campaigns or inviting a campaign organizer from a nearby state to talk about his/her experiences. Be sure to involve everyone in your group in the preparation for the session and the follow up activities afterwards.

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. Please contact Liz Ryan at lryan@cfyj.org. For previous articles, visit the campaign resource center at: <http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/advocacy-resource-center.html>.

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