

# CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

November - December 2009 Newsletter

The Campaign for Youth Justice is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing, and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system.

## In This Issue

ACROSS THE COUNTRY

FROM THE HILL

RESEARCH & POLICY

NATIONAL MOMENTUM

GET ORGANIZED

VOICES

ON THE CALENDAR AND A HOLIDAY  
GIFT IDEA

GET IN THE ACTION AND PUT YOUR  
DOLLARS TO WORK!

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

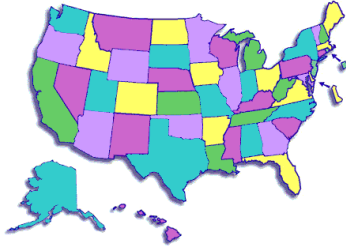


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## ACROSS THE COUNTRY



### Denver Hosts Symposium on Children Prosecuted in Adult Courts

In Denver, Colorado on November 12, the Office of the Child's Representative and the Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition presented "Defending Childhood: A Symposium on the Prosecution of Children in Adult Courts." The symposium was held at the State Capitol and featured Colorado State Representative Claire Levy, Speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives Terrance Carroll, and Dwayne Betts, author of *A Question of Freedom: A Memoir of Learning, Survival, And Coming of Age in Prison*.

Carroll opened the symposium with remarks about the disservice done to children when they are prosecuted as adults, stating that "their options for a productive life are substantially limited." Betts read excerpts from his recent book and spoke of his experiences as a child in prison.

A panel discussion featuring youth and the families of children prosecuted as adults followed the symposium. Dr. Jerry Yager, Executive Director of Denver Children's Home, was also on the panel and spoke on adolescent brain development.

Those interested in the activities and work of the Colorado Juvenile Defender Coalition should contact Kim Dvorchak at 303.601.4900 or [kimdvorchak@yahoo.com](mailto:kimdvorchak@yahoo.com).

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### Juvenile Justice Roundtable: Community Leaders and Youth Chart Next Steps for Reform in DC

On November 4, more than 50 community leaders and youth from the District of Columbia participated in a roundtable to explore next steps for reforming DC's juvenile justice system. The event was cosponsored by the Campaign for Youth Justice and Justice for DC Youth and held at the New Beginnings Youth Development Center, the new state-of-the-art secure facility for committed youth in DC.

The discussion centered on 35 recommendations developed during a DC juvenile justice community strategy meeting in October. The recommendations incorporate input from community members and organizations representing all Wards of DC, including currently and formerly incarcerated youth and parents who have been directly affected by the juvenile justice system. The recommendations address disproportionate minority contact (DMC), strengthen community-based alternatives to incarceration, improve institutional care, and reform policies for

transfer to adult court and placement in adult jails and prisons.

Many of the recommendations build upon those made in 2001 by the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Juvenile Justice. At the roundtable, the Honorable Eugene Hamilton, former Chief Judge of the DC Superior Court and Chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission, applauded the reforms that have taken place in DC, but made clear that the work is not yet done particularly with regard to youth tried as adults and DMC.

Judge Hamilton was joined by a panel of experts that included: Vincent Schiraldi, Director of the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services; Rodney Newman, Chief Operating Officer of the Alliance for Concerned Men; Eduardo Ferrer, Executive Director of DC Lawyers for Youth; Erin Davies, CFYJ Legislative Director; and Shani O'Neal, Director of Justice for DC Youth.

The roundtable was an excellent first step in a collaborative effort to continue momentum and build alliances for positive juvenile justice reform for District youth.

A copy of the recommendations is available at

[http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/dc\\_jj\\_roundtable\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/dc_jj_roundtable_recommendations.pdf).

Judge Hamilton's remarks at the roundtable are available at [http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/remarks\\_by\\_honorable\\_eugene\\_hamilton.pdf](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/remarks_by_honorable_eugene_hamilton.pdf).

A copy of the Blue Ribbon Commission's 2001 report is available at

<https://digitalcommons.georgetown.edu/blogs/oakhill/documents-and-resources/blue-ribbon-commission/>.

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## **Missouri's Second Annual Campaign for Youth Justice Run/Walk "An Excellent Day"**

Tracy McClard, race organizer and parent of a child prosecuted as an adult, writes:

*The second annual Campaign for Youth Justice 5K Run/Walk was held on Sunday, October 25 at North Cape County Park in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The race, themed 'A Hard Race for a Hard Cause,' follows a purposefully challenging course because the prosecution of youth as adults is difficult on a variety of levels. Incarcerated children and their families live very difficult, challenging lives. Changing the current laws can be compared to running a long, hard race.*

*This year's race highlighted youth who are incarcerated in America's jails.... Race participants, volunteers and sponsors received shirts touting the message [which read] 'On any given day in America 7,500 youth are held in adult jails....' [Additionally], they received fact sheets and information addressing this issue of juvenile transfer to the adult system... [and] a personal letter from me detailing the story of my son [who was prosecuted as an adult*

*and committed suicide in an adult jail].... Information on juvenile transfer, the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, 'Join the Movement' literature, pins, and bracelets [were also available].*

*Attendance at this year's race doubled from last year, reaching 90 people, [and] local exposure was huge.... Exposure consisted of advertising on running sites [where] race pictures are going to be posted... Several bystanders...committed to helping at next year's race, and a well-known racing company offered to advertise next year's race for free [and] post pictures... I have been promised a spot on the local news to promote the race next year, and the news is going to cover the day of the race. It was an excellent day!*

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## **The JustChildren Program Releases Report Evaluating Virginia's Youth Transfer Laws**

On November 17, the JustChildren Program (JCP) of the Charlottesville Legal Aid Justice Center released a new report calling on Virginia policy makers to reexamine the state's current system for trying youth as adults. The report,

"Don't Throw Away the Key: Reevaluating Adult Time for Youth Crime in Virginia," examines the impact of the 1996 law changes which reduced the authority of juvenile court judges and allowed the easier transfer of juvenile-criminal cases to adult courts. The report finds that the law is overly broad and unbalanced, can be unfairly applied, and leads to increases in youth re-offending rates. The findings and recommendations are timely as the Virginia State Crime Commission is



currently studying the issue of trying of youth as adults. Families present at the Commission's latest December meeting are pictured on the right.

Key findings from "Don't Throw Away the Key: Reevaluating Adult Time for Youth Crime in Virginia" include:

- The law is overly broad and unnecessarily sweeps youth with less serious offenses into the adult criminal justice system. For example, more than 1 in 5 of all youth convicted of felonies in Circuit Court only require and receive a sentence of probation.
- The law is unbalanced as prosecutors have unprecedented authority, that often does not require meaningful judicial review, over the decision on whether or not to try a youth in the adult criminal justice system. In these instances, they are not required to consider any information beyond the juvenile's age and the charge and must make the decision very

early on in the case. As a result, too many youth unnecessarily receive adult felony convictions and are exposed to adult prisoners.

- The law is unfair as it often lacks impartial, reviewable, and transparent decisions and disproportionately affects African American youth. More than 80% of the youth who are tried as adults are African American, even though only approximately 20% of youth in Virginia are African American.
- The law is counter-productive as trying youth as adults increases, rather than decreases crime. Studies show that youth transferred to adult court were 34% more likely to re-offend than youth remaining in the juvenile justice system.
- The majority of professionals working in Virginia's juvenile justice system support changing the current law and giving judges the authority and responsibility to make transfer decisions.

More information on trying youth as adults in Virginia and the full JCP report is available at [www.dontthrowawaythekey.org](http://www.dontthrowawaythekey.org).

Recent media coverage on the Virginia Crime Commission's study of youth transfer laws and an organized press conference by advocates includes:

- Parents seek juvenile justice changes - NBC 12 (video available) <http://www.nbc12.com/Global/story.asp?S=11681921>
- State Lawmakers Stuck on Juvenile Courts - NBC 29 (video available) <http://www.nbc29.com/global/Category.asp?C=175568&clipId=4388099&autostart=true>
- Virginia Crime Panel Extends Juvenile Justice Study - CBS 19 (video available) <http://www.newsplex.com/home/headlines/79323122.html>
- VA Crime Panel Extends Juvenile Justice Study - Associated Press <http://www.wtvr.com/news/dp-va--juvenilejustice1215dec15,0,5426900.story>
- Virginia panel hears about juvenile justice disparities, 'sexting' laws - *Richmond Times-Dispatch* [http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/news/state\\_regional/article/CRIM16\\_20091215-220809/311807/](http://www2.timesdispatch.com/rtd/news/state_regional/article/CRIM16_20091215-220809/311807/)
- Don't charge juveniles as adults, advocates urge - *The Virginian-Pilot* <http://hamptonroads.com/2009/12/dont-charge-juveniles-adults-advocates-urge>
- Editorial: Justice delayed - *The Roanoke Times* <http://www.roanoke.com/editorials/wb/229983>

[Back to Top](#)

**FROM THE HILL**



## JJDPA Passes Through Senate Judiciary Committee 12-7!

On Thursday, December 17, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved S. 678, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization of 2009, by a vote of 12-7. The amendment offered by Senator Sessions failed to pass. The Sessions amendment would have changed current federal transfer laws by removing judges' authority to make decisions about whether a youth should be prosecuted as an adult for an enumerated list of crimes and instead places the decision solely with prosecutors.

This legislation, S. 678, would reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) - one of the major federal laws focusing on juvenile justice issues. S. 678 was introduced on March 24, 2009 and currently has eight bipartisan co-sponsors. A summary of the bill as introduced can be found at <http://www.campaign4youthjustice.com/documents/SummaryoftheJJDP2009Bills.678.pdf>.

The CFYJ letter in support of the bill can be found at [http://www.campaign4youthjustice.com/documents/LetterinSupportoftheJJDP\\_000.pdf](http://www.campaign4youthjustice.com/documents/LetterinSupportoftheJJDP_000.pdf).

Press releases from CFYJ and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) covering the passage of the JJDP in the Senate Judiciary Committee are available at <http://www.prweb.com/releases/S678/2009/prweb3360524.htm> and <http://leahy.senate.gov/press/200912/121709b.html>, respectively.

This week's vote in the Senate was a key victory for JJDP and for youth across the country. THANK YOU to everyone who helped by contacting their Senator!

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### *Youth Today* Hosts Forum with OJJDP Administrators

On November 10, *Youth Today* hosted six of the eight former administrators of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at an event entitled "OJJDP @ 35: A Juvenile Justice Conversation." OJJDP, an agency within the Department of Justice established in 1974, focuses on juvenile justice issues, including the issue of youth tried as adults.

OJJDP administrators who spoke on the panel included: President Carter appointees John Rector, the first administrator of OJJDP, and Ira Schwartz; President Reagan appointees Al Regnery and Verne Speirs; President George H.W. Bush appointee Bob Sweet; and President Clinton appointee Shay Bilchik. Also in attendance were OJJDP's current acting administrator,

Jeff Slowikowski and Laurie Robinson, Assistant Attorney General for Justice Programs.

Each former administrator discussed the priorities undertaken by OJJDP during his tenure, the role of OJJDP within the Department of Justice, and the accomplishments they were most proud of achieving. Former administrator Schwartz stated the major accomplishment during his tenure was the successful implementation of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act's original jail removal and sight and sound provisions which keep youth in the juvenile justice system out of adult jails.

Many of the former administrators had never previously interacted with each other, and thus, the event created a unique opportunity for them to discuss juvenile justice. After the forum, six of the former administrators sent a letter urging Congress to pass the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) as soon as possible. The letter and press release are available at

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/OJJDPLetter/2009/prweb3312574.htm>.

Further information on the event is available on the *Youth Today* website, including:

- An article on the event (available at [http://www.youthtoday.org/publication/article.cfm?article\\_id=3672](http://www.youthtoday.org/publication/article.cfm?article_id=3672));
- Biographies and accomplishments of all the administrators (available at [http://www.youthtodayexchange.org/?page\\_id=19](http://www.youthtodayexchange.org/?page_id=19));
- Detailed information about the history and tenures of the administrators (available at <http://www.youthtodayexchange.org/?cat=3>); and
- Videos of each of the former administrators' speeches (available at <http://www.youthtodayexchange.org/?p=525>).

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## **Congressional Staff Tour New Beginnings Youth Development Center in DC**

On November 9, Congressional staff toured the New Beginnings Youth Development Center, the new state-of-the-art secure facility for committed youth in DC.

Fifteen Congressional staff representing 11 different Congressional offices participated in the tour. This included the District of Columbia's Delegate and the House Education and Labor Committee which has jurisdiction over the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), the main piece of federal juvenile justice legislation.

The tour was led by Vincent Schiraldi, Director of the DC Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS), Marc Schindler, the Chief of Staff of DYRS, other high-level DYRS staff, and

youth currently held at New Beginnings. The tour showed Congressional staff the new facility, which opened earlier this year, as well as original and upgraded units at Oak Hill, the prior DC youth corrections facility. Thus, the tour provided Congressional staff with a progressive view of the various conditions under which youth in the juvenile justice system can be held.

The tour event highlighted juvenile justice issues for Congressional staff and encouraged them to visit juvenile and adult locked facilities in their Member of Congress's home district. The timing of the tour was particularly relevant as Congress is due to reauthorize the JJDPA. Information on the JJDPA is available at <http://www.campaign4youthjustice.com/fedlaw.html>.

[Back to Top](#)

## RESEARCH & POLICY

### Report Finds Depictions of Youth in the Media Remain Distorted

This fall, the Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG) released "Moving from Them to Us: Challenges in Reframing Violence Among Youth." In this latest report, BMSG collected and examined studies on youth, race, violence and media coverage since 2001, when they published the first report on this topic, "Off Balance: Youth, Race, and Crime in the News." In "Off Balance," BMSG wanted to know: Does news coverage reflect actual crime trends? How does news coverage depict minorities and crime? Does news coverage disproportionately depict youth of color as perpetrators of crime? What are the implications for prevention and public health policy? In the new report, BMSG examined each of the studies to assess whether they upheld the four key findings from the original report which found that:

1. News media report crime, especially violent crime, out of proportion to its actual occurrence. The most consistent finding across media and across time is the significant distortion of the amount of violent crime.
2. News media continue to report crime as a series of individual isolated events without adequate attention to any broader context.
3. The news media, particularly TV news, unduly connect race and crime, especially violent crime. The overwhelming evidence from these studies is that in the aggregate, crime coverage is not reflecting an accurate picture of who the victims and perpetrators are. Most studies that examine race and crime find that the proportion of crime committed by people of color (usually African Americans) is over-reported and that Black victims are under-represented. Other studies find that crimes committed by people of color are covered in proportion with arrest rates, but that crimes committed by whites are under-covered.

4. Youth rarely appear in news, and when they do, it is often connected to violence. One study found depictions of youth in violence-related news stories as often as there were depictions of youth in stories about education. Yet almost all young people are engaged in the education system, while a very small percentage of young people are engaged with the criminal justice system or law enforcement. Equalizing the two in news coverage distorts the overall picture of young people.

Overall, "Off Balance" indicated that depictions of crime in the news are not reflective of either the rate of crime generally, the proportion of crime that is violent, the proportion of crime committed by people of color, or the proportion of crime committed by youth. The original report noted that the problem is not the inaccuracy of individual news stories, but that the cumulative choices of what journalists select - or do not select- to include in the news presents the public with a false picture of higher frequency and severity of crime than is actually the case. Rather than informing citizens about their world, the news reinforces stereotypes that inhibit society's ability to respond to the problem of crime, including juvenile crime.

Since the publication of "Off Balance" in 2001, the picture has not changed. "Moving from Them to Us" found that the majority (62%) of the recent studies of youth, race, and violence in the media confirmed at least one finding from "Off Balance" while only four studies (10%) contradicted or reported mixed results on one of the findings. The news media continue to focus on episodic factors rather than context, and compared to crime trends, violence continues to be over-represented in all types of news media, particularly on local TV news.

The latest report noted a few bright spots in the studies of more recent news coverage. One study found that national broadcast news does not misrepresent the number of white or African American perpetrators in violence stories as compared to police statistics. Another study found that Los Angeles print media report contextual factors significantly more when writing about gang violence and also found that ethnicity was not correlated to how a homicide story is reported. Overall, however, the picture of youth, race, and crime in the news remains greatly distorted.

A copy of "Moving from Them to Us" can be found at [http://preventioninstitute.org/documents/BMSGReframingViolence\\_001.pdf](http://preventioninstitute.org/documents/BMSGReframingViolence_001.pdf).

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## **Supreme Court Hears Two Juvenile Life Without Parole Cases**

On November 9, the U.S. Supreme Court heard two cases involving juveniles serving life without parole sentences (JLWOP) for non-homicide offenses. Both cases argue the reasoning of *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005), striking down the juvenile death penalty, should also apply to

JLWOP in non-homicide cases. *Roper* ruled the death penalty for juveniles was cruel and unusual punishment under the 8th Amendment, noting the widespread international aversion to executing minors, the relatively rare application of this penalty for juveniles in the United States, and the developments in adolescent psychology that show that a youthful offender does not have the same psychological make-up as an adult offender.

Both of the JLWOP cases being heard by the Supreme Court originated in Florida. Terrance Jamar Graham was sentenced to life in prison without parole following an alleged participation in an armed robbery and his attempt to elude a law enforcement officer at age 17. This violated his sentence of probation from a prior armed burglary and attempted armed robbery committed when he was 16 years old. Graham was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for the violation of probation for his first offense based on a trial courts determination that he had violated his probation. The counsel of record for Graham is Bryan Gowdy of Mills Creed & Gowdy, P.A. in Jacksonville, Florida. The transcripts of the Graham argument can be found at

[http://www.supremecourtus.gov/oral\\_arguments/argument\\_transcripts/08-7412.pdf](http://www.supremecourtus.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/08-7412.pdf).

Joe Harris Sullivan was convicted and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for a crime committed at age 13 in 1989. Sullivan was convicted of the rape of an elderly woman in her house, following his participation in a burglary earlier that day at the home when the victim wasn't present. The counsel of record for Sullivan is Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama. The transcript of the Sullivan argument can be found at

[http://www.supremecourtus.gov/oral\\_arguments/argument\\_transcripts/08-7621.pdf](http://www.supremecourtus.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/08-7621.pdf).

A ruling on the cases is expected in the Spring. Additional information about the cases, including recent media clips can be found at <http://www.endjwop.org/scotus/>.

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## **Workshop at the American Society of Criminology Conference Discusses Data on Youth Transfer**

On November 4 - 7, members of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) met in Philadelphia to discuss "Criminology and Criminal Justice," the theme of this year's annual meeting. ASC is an international organization whose members pursue scholarly, scientific, and professional knowledge concerning the measurement, etiology, consequences, prevention, control, and treatment of crime and delinquency.

The workshop, "Filling in Our Statistical Picture of Juvenile Transfer," was organized by CFYJ Advisory Council member Patrick Griffin of the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), and panelists included Howard Snyder from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), Sean Addie from NCJJ, Kristin Johnson from the University of Florida, and CFYJ Research and Policy Director

Neelum Arya.

In the workshop, the panel recognized that after decades of aggressive expansion of juvenile transfer laws, the statistical picture of transfer in the United States remains surprisingly fragmentary and incomplete. There are no national datasets that track the overall number of juveniles who are tried as adults.

The panel discussed what is known about the volume and characteristics of juvenile transfers and explored ways to build knowledge, with the ultimate goal of acquiring the information needed to assess the operation, effectiveness, and impact of the nation's expanded transfer laws. Both NCJJ and BJS, the two leading entities collecting information about youth tried as adults, shared their efforts to improve data and indicated that more information about youth tried as adults will be available in the coming years.

[Back to Top](#)

## NATIONAL MOMENTUM



### Join the Movement!

We, at the Campaign for Youth Justice, have launched an exciting and innovative new campaign called "Join the Movement!" We hope to build a network of caring individuals and together create a movement of people to make reform happen. Learn what it takes to organize and build campaigns and empower yourself and those around you to create a movement for change.

To get started with the Join the Movement Campaign and join other like-minded individuals who seek change, request your Join the Movement Action Kit by emailing [jointhemovement@cfyj.org](mailto:jointhemovement@cfyj.org).

[Back to Top](#)

## GET ORGANIZED

A Monthly Column by Grace Bauer

## The Lessons I Learned

When my son was arrested and adjudicated delinquent in the state of Louisiana in 2001, I embarked on a journey that I was, to say the very least, unprepared for. Sadly, my ignorance and naiveté allowed the system to perpetrate a crime against my young son far worse than the crime he was guilty of. Now, at the end of another year and almost a decade of involvement with the system, I can say the only good things that came out of my experiences in the juvenile and criminal justice systems are the lessons I learned and have shared with others. Here I will share them yet again.

### Juvenile Court Lessons:

- Never plead guilty; get an attorney, protect your child's rights.
- Remain silent; get an attorney and protect your child's rights.
- People in suits with long, impressive titles and college degrees do not know more about your child than you do.
- You are the best judge of your child's strengths and challenges.
- Children usually do much better at home with services than locked up in a correctional institution.
- People running institutions and juvenile courts do not necessarily have your child's best interest at heart; get an attorney, protect your child's rights.
- People in suits with long, impressive titles and college degrees sometimes make mistakes.
- Get an attorney and protect your child's rights. This is not the job of anyone in the system; it is solely on YOU as the parent.

### Adult Criminal Court Lessons:

- Never plead guilty; get an attorney, protect your child's rights.
- Make the state prove their case.
- Visit your child regularly. If you can't visit, write frequently.
- Stay in touch with the prison chaplain.
- Encourage your child to prepare for a day when he/she is free.
- Keep your child updated on family issues and happenings.

### Overall Lessons:

- Never give up!

Document everything.

- Never go alone to meetings with attorneys or probation officers, you may need someone to help you take notes or keep a cool head.
  - If the court and prison systems in this country actually worked we would not have over 2 million people locked up (which is more than any other country).
  - If the systems worked we would not have high crime rates and even higher recidivism rates.
  - Locking the wrong people up costs money and affects everyone.
  - Race is an issue when it comes to prisons in this country. Whites and people of color commit crimes at almost exactly the same rate, yet look inside the walls of any prison and the faces you see there do not reflect this.
- We are not alone in our struggle for justice! With so many behind bars and their families numbering in the millions, together we should demand change and hold these systems accountable for the harm they do our children, our families, and our communities!

At the Campaign for Youth Justice, we believe that one of the most important voices in reform conversations are the voices of families and youth. We invite you to contact us to get involved and make your voice heard. So, take a minute and let us hear from you! I can be reached at [gbauer@cfyj.org](mailto:gbauer@cfyj.org) or 202.558.3580. If not you, then who?

[Back to Top](#)

## VOICES



### "My Big Brother"

Story told by Caroline Bauer (transcribed by Grace Bauer)

*I was seven years old the first time my brother went to a juvenile facility. He was 13. I thought it was a jail, but my brother called it "juvie". I could not go in because I was too little, but I could see the high fences and barb wire all around from where I waited with my sister in the car. We knew my brother was in really big trouble and that my parents were really upset. I didn't understand much of what was happening at that time. I just missed him and was worried about what was going to happen to him.*

*When he came home, over a year later, we celebrated. I didn't have the wisdom then to understand that this would be the first of many separations and reunions with my brother. In time I learned that his long absences from home*

*changed something in my big brother. When I was able to visit he would talk about things that I didn't know anything about, people I didn't know, and a way of life that seemed strange and scary to me. He didn't have Mom or Dad to take care of him; he didn't go to school; he didn't have his own clothes [or] play any games or sports, and the people that were supposed to take care of him abused him. He stopped smiling and seemed much older than the brother who used to play with me on the dirt hill in the backyard for hours at a time.*

*For the next nine years my brother went in and out of other juvenile lock ups and then ended up in an adult prison. Every day he was gone I missed him. Now I miss in him what those years inside took from him. He wasn't there when I played volleyball or when I danced around the stage at my recital. He didn't get to come to family events or be at my birthday parties. Happy moments, holidays, and special events were always touched by sadness because he wasn't with us.*

*I knew that he missed [us], too, and that he wanted to come home with us. [At visits] I was happy to see him and, at the same time, sad because I knew I would have to leave him and feel his sadness. My mom usually cried on the way home... Sometimes I thought it would be better if we didn't go because everyone would feel sad again, but my heart missed him and staying away hurt, too.*

*My brother was just released from jail two weeks ago and is trying to build a new and different life for himself. I'm scared for him because I know that he will have to fight hard to make it work and that he has lots of things against him. He wants to go to college, but he can't get financial assistance because he is a convicted felon. He wants to get a job, but he doesn't know how to do anything. He has missed all of the experiences that help you to grow up and be able to take care of yourself.*

*I remember going to visit him, not long after he was sent away the first time, and he told us about all of the things that had happened to him. He had bruises on his face. I kept wondering why he wasn't crying. In my little sister heart I believed it was because he was so strong and that it didn't hurt him. After all these years of hurt, loss, and hard times I know he didn't cry that day because he couldn't, not there. I know something else, too. My brother will make it, and he will become the person he wants to be. I know because he once pushed me on a swing and laughed when I laughed, he held me up to the water fountain so I could be like the big kids, [and] he kissed me goodnight and read me stories. Mostly, I know because the other day, as we sat across the table from one another looking at pictures of our family, I saw him smile again. My brother is still in there and I am going to help him find his way back.*

[Back to Top](#)

## ON THE CALENDAR



## February 25 - 27

The 2nd Annual Prisoner's Family Conference, sponsored by Community SOLUTIONS of El Paso, will be held February 25 - 27 2009 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida. The conference, designed for the families of prisoners and those working with these families, offers an opportunity to develop awareness, increase understanding, and initiate action that will improve the quality of life for the families of prisoners and their communities. The event includes a diverse lineup workshops as well as speakers, and presenters from across the country including CFYJ's Field Organizer, Grace Bauer, and Parent Advocate, Tracy McClard.

For more information or to register for the event, go to <http://solutionsforel Paso.org> or call Community SOLUTIONS of El Paso at 915.861.7733.

[Back to Top](#)

## NEED A HOLIDAY GIFT?

Doing some last minute shopping for the holidays? If so, *A Question of Freedom* by R. Dwayne Betts makes a great holiday gift for a family member or friend! According to the Baltimore Sun, the book is a "must-read!" Dwayne tells his story in a recent opinion editorial, "How the Juvenile Justice System Failed Me and How to Fix it" at: [http://criminaljustice.change.org/blog/view/how\\_the\\_juvenile\\_justice\\_system\\_failed\\_me\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_fix\\_it](http://criminaljustice.change.org/blog/view/how_the_juvenile_justice_system_failed_me_and_how_to_fix_it).

Copies of *A Question of Freedom* are available at Barnes & Nobles Bookstores or online at Amazon at: [http://www.amazon.com/Question-Freedom-Memoir-Learning-Survival/dp/1583333487/ref=cm\\_cr\\_pb\\_t](http://www.amazon.com/Question-Freedom-Memoir-Learning-Survival/dp/1583333487/ref=cm_cr_pb_t).

[Back to Top](#)

## GET IN THE ACTION WITH CFYJ

**Follow** CFYJ on [Twitter](#).

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

**Listen to** [Juvenile Justice Matters](#) radio show Thursdays at 4:30 p.m. EDT.

**Call in to** [Juvenile Justice Matters](#) with your questions at 347-843-4360.

**Join** the [Campaign for Youth Justice on Facebook](#) and connect with hundreds of advocates across the country.

**Visit** the [Campaign's YouTube channel](#).

**Read** [JJ Today](#), *Youth Today's* blog on juvenile justice.

[Back to Top](#)

## PUT YOUR DOLLARS TO WORK!

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[Back to Top](#)

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