

# *the* CAMPAIGN *for the* FAIR SENTENCING *of* YOUTH



## STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

We believe that young people convicted of serious crimes should be held accountable for the harm they have caused in a way that reflects their capacity to grow and change. We believe in fair sentencing for youth that reflects our human rights, values and moral beliefs, and as such, the fundamental difference between youth and adults. Research has proven that youth are still developing both physically and emotionally and their brains, not just their bodies, are not yet fully mature. Because of these differences, youth have greater potential to become rehabilitated. Therefore, we believe that youth under the age of 18 should never be sentenced to prison for the rest of their lives without hope of release.

We believe that a just alternative to life in prison without parole is to provide careful reviews to determine whether, years later, individuals convicted of crimes as youth continue to pose a threat to the community. There would be no guarantee of release—only the opportunity to demonstrate that they are capable of making responsible decisions and do not pose a threat to society. This alternative to life without parole sentencing appropriately reflects the harm that has been done, as well as the special needs and rights of youth, and focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

We know that victims and survivors of serious crimes committed by youth endure significant hardship and trauma. They deserve to be provided with supportive services, and should be notified about sentencing reviews related to their cases. We believe in restorative practices that promote healing for the crime victims as well as the young people who have been convicted of crimes.

Sentencing minors to life terms sends an unequivocal message to young people that they are beyond redemption. We believe that society should not be in the practice of discarding young people convicted of crimes for life, but instead, should provide motivations and opportunities for healing, rehabilitation, and the potential for them to one day return to our communities as productive members of society.

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