

# Support for Campaign to End Life Imprisonment

Young People Emerging Act

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On the night of my arrest I died, metaphorically. The fear of imprisonment paralyzed my heart. The beginning years of my incarceration was occupied by a hollowed body. My corpse was visible but my soul was invisible. A deep sense of confusion plagued my mind. No counseling was given. I had no one to speak to about the complexities of my heavy burden. Death by silence. Blinded by darkness. Immobile by bars. Stuck in a twilight zone I spent a decade reeling over the impact. It took Providence to penetrate the thick walls that held my spirit captive. Faith gave hope to my despair.

By default my peers, the same men condemned to my peril, became my counselors, confidants, friends, and brothers. The cords that divided us were severed. New ties prevail. Some of us are here wrongfully, others justifiably. Yet, the constant fact remains, the traits that mark youthful immaturity are not fixed.

The motivation behind the Young People Emerging (YPE) Act is the qualitative stories of young adults from the late 80's and the early 90's from some of the roughest neighborhoods from the four quadrants of the city of Washington, D.C. YPE were once rivals, competitors and nemesis. Today, YPE are middle-age men who have forged unlikely bonds by all accounts through long-term incarceration (over 20 years). At-large YPE have "aged out of crime" and outgrown the concept of incarceration.

Science now imparts that the transient phase of immaturity last into the mid 20's. Empirical data supports that the "likelihood of committing offenses in the future drops sharply beginning at age 40. After spending more than a decade in prison, many aging, even once-violent, individuals represent little threat to public safety. For this group of people, any societal benefit of incarceration has long since been achieved." Blumstein and Nakamura 2009; Sampson and Laub 2004.

***Twenty-years (20) is enough!***

Respectfully submitted,



Joel Castón