

THE OBSERVER



Monthly Publication

Volume 2 | Publication 11

Reporting Accurate and Objective Information Based on Facts, not Agenda-Setting Theories

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3:21 PM EST | March 15, 2010

Youth Without A Future Juvenile Life Without Parole (JLWOP) Part 1

[2500+ individuals](#) under the age of 18 years who reside in the United States have a life sentence without the possibility of parole and [59% of them received this punishment for their first conviction](#). 26% of those JLWOP were co-participants in a murder *without intent* and/or the teen's awareness and 16% were between 13-15 years old at the time of the offense.

Alison Parker Senior Researcher for Human Rights in the USA and author of the report *The Rest of Their Lives* had this to say. *Quote*: "In its 2005 decision to eliminate the juvenile death penalty, the [United States Supreme Court](#) enumerated "three general differences between juveniles under nineteen and adults."[\[230\]](#) First, "any parent knows" and "scientific and sociological studies . . . tend to confirm . . . [that youth possess a] lack of maturity . . . an underdeveloped sense of responsibility . . . [they take] impetuous and ill-considered actions and decisions . . . [and they are] comparative[ly] immatur[e] and irresponsibl[e]."[\[231\]](#) Second, the Court found that youth are more susceptible to negative influences and peer pressure. Third, the Court stated that a youth's character is not as well-formed as that of an adult, meaning he or she can and probably will change. The Court concluded that it would be "misguided to equate the failings of a minor with those of an adult, for a greater possibility exists that a minor's character deficiencies will be reformed."[\[232\]](#) *Unquote* . . .

[Life without parole discourages youth offenders](#) from attempting to reform themselves in prison. But rehabilitation is also stymied by the special hardships inherent in the life without parole sentence. Youth wrestle with the anger and emotional turmoil of coming to grips with the knowledge they will die in prison. They are denied educational, vocational, and other programs to develop their minds and skills, because correctional authorities reserve these under-funded programs for prisoners who will someday be released. Not surprisingly, child offenders sentenced to life without parole believe that U.S. society has thrown them and respect for human dignity, away.

The American Bar Association (ABA) has long been opposed to the life without parole sentence for an offense an individual commits when less than 18. The [ABA Juvenile Justice E-Newsletter](#) June 2009 (No: 3) reports:

Quote: "In *Roper v. Simmons*, 543 U.S. 551 (2005) the United States Supreme Court found that capital punishment for individuals under the age of 18 was cruel and unusual, violating the [Eighth Amendment](#). In reaching that decision, the Court found that juveniles exhibit a lack of maturity and an underdeveloped sense of responsibility as compared to adults that often results in impetuous and ill-considered decisions;

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juveniles are more vulnerable to negative influences and peer pressure; and the character of juveniles was not as well formed as an adult, and their personality traits were more transitory, less fixed.

Simply put, the Roper Court recognized that *“teenagers are not adults, they take more risks, they overreact, and they can change. These factors strongly suggest that death in prison sentences for children are cruel and unusual under the Eighth Amendment”* . . . Unquote . . .

[Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice - Annual Report 2009](#)

[Text of H.R. 2289: Juvenile Justice Accountability and Improvement Act of 2009](#)

[State Distribution of Youth Offenders Serving Juvenile Life Without Parole \(JLWOP\)](#)

Youth Without a Future - Series

Part II: Yin & Yang of Youth & Adults

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