

## Natl Briefs (cont. page 3)

...serving life without parole sentences experienced trauma and neglect long before they engaged in their crimes. The findings from this survey do not excuse the crimes committed but they help explain them.”

Findings include: 79.1% experienced violence in their homes; Nearly half endured sexual abuse.

Read the full report at [sentencingproject.org](http://sentencingproject.org)

## Your Voice Matters to Legislators (cont. page 3)

**Keep it short and on one subject.** Many newspapers and websites have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them. Keeping your letter brief will help assure that your important points are not cut out by the newspaper or news website editor.

**Make it legible.** Your letter doesn't have to be fancy, but you should use a typewriter or computer if your handwriting is difficult to read.

**Send letters to weekly community newspapers and websites too.** The more small community-oriented the newspaper or website is (Patch.com, for example), the easier it is to get your letter printed.

**Be sure to include your contact information.** Many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify his or her identity and address. Newspapers will not give out that information, and will usually only print your name and city should your letter be published.

**Make references to the newspaper or news website.** While some papers or news websites run general commentary, many will only publish letters that refer to a specific article.



Our JLWOP Family Teams began writing to their legislators in the state House and Senate, have sent dozens of letters so far, and will continue contacting elected officials in coming months. We have developed several easy-to-use tools, including samples and contact information, in order to help you get started. We will gladly help you get the ball rolling and get you additional materials as needed.. Simply email us at [JLWOP@aclumich.org](mailto:JLWOP@aclumich.org).

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JLWOP Campaign  
News from the  
ACLU of Michigan

# Juvenile Justice Times

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## In the Courts: Are Juvenile Life Without Parole Sentences Cruel and Unusual Punishment?

This year, the U.S. Supreme Court will decide two cases involving the practice of sentencing of juveniles to life in prison without parole. The decisions will have clear implications for JLWOP cases in Michigan and other states.

In **Jackson v. Hobbs** and **Miller v. Alabama**, the Supreme Court will decide whether it is cruel and unusual punishment to sentence teens to life without parole for murder and felony murder. To learn more and see more information on these cases, go to [www.endjlwop.org](http://www.endjlwop.org)

In a recent high profile Michigan case, fifteen-year-old **Charles Lewis Jr.** was facing a possible life without parole sentence last month after being convicted of participating in a crime that led to a murder. He was just 13 at the time of the incident, and his father is alleged to be responsible for the fatal shooting.

The judge instead gave Charles a delayed, or blended,

sentence. The teen was sent to a juvenile detention facility where he will remain until he turns 21, at which point he will be reevaluated. At that point, even if the Supreme Court rulings in *Miller* and *Jackson* make LWOP unconstitutional for those 14 and under, Charles could still be subject to an adult sentence, possibly pardonable life.

According to attorney Deborah LaBelle, “the law is unclear when he would be eligible for parole. If the Supreme Court only strikes down mandatory sentences, which do not consider lesser culpability, this may not impact Charles as the Court was required to consider his youth in deciding on the sentence. We will have to see what the Court says.”

The other case making national headlines in Michigan this year was **People v. Jones**. In the first ruling of its kind since the U.S. Supreme Court declared juvenile life without parole sentences for non-capital crimes unconstitutional in 2010, a judge... (cont. page 2)



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## Legislative & Organizing Update

Realizing no true progress can be made toward putting an end to the practice of locking up children for life without parole, the ACLU of Michigan is working on legislative reform to change state laws.

### You can help.

We are looking for people who are willing to help us by talking to legislators, spreading awareness in communities, and recruiting others to do the same.

You don't have to already be experienced, or have a lot of time to help.

Our goal is to connect as many people interested in helping our campaign in as many local communities as possible so we can cover as much of the state and speak to as many elected officials as we are able to.

If you are interested in helping by talking to elected officials, increasing awareness, or getting involved with support teams, email [JLWOP@aclumich.org](mailto:JLWOP@aclumich.org).



## In the Courts Update (cont. from p. 1)

...in Kalamazoo overturned the sentence of Michigan prisoner **Anthony Shamont Jones**. Anthony was just 17 when he left the scene of a robbery before his companion shot the store owner to death. Anthony was re-sentenced to life with parole.

In the ruling, the court remarked that Anthony "is one of the juveniles whom the U.S. Supreme Court in *Graham* attempts to shield from a life in prison without even the potential for re-entry into society. This is so primarily because Defendant did not kill [the victim]."

This historic case also recognized that a 17 year-old would be considered a juvenile, despite Michigan's law setting the adult age at 17 for all criminal prosecutions.

As he has served 33 years, Anthony is now eligible for immediate release. The prosecutor will not appeal, and neither the prosecutor nor the victim's family oppose parole.

Keep up to date on the latest news at [www.aclumich.org](http://www.aclumich.org) or [www.endjlwop.org](http://www.endjlwop.org)

## One Man's Story: Henry Hill



**Henry Hill** was sixteen in 1980 when he and two of his friends got into an argument with an acquaintance at a park. Henry had already left the park when an 18-year-old friend shot and killed another boy.

Despite psychologists' recommendations that he stay in the juvenile system, Henry was waived to adult court for trial.

He was convicted of aiding and abetting first-degree murder and sentenced to mandatory life without parole: the same sentence given to the actual shooter.

Henry Hill has spent his decades in prison earning his GED and vocational qualifications. Without a change in the laws that would recognize his growth and maturity, more years will pass with Henry behind bars.

Share your story by emailing the ACLU of Michigan at [jlwop@aclumich.org](mailto:jlwop@aclumich.org)



## JLWOP National News Briefs

### Human Rights Group to Look at 32 Michigan JLWOP Cases

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights will hear a petition filed by Deborah LaBelle, the Columbia Law School Human Rights Institute, and the ACLU Human Rights Program on behalf of 32 juveniles sentenced to life without parole in Michigan.

The commission will rule on whether sentencing these inmates to life without parole sentences when they were juveniles violated provisions of the American Declaration.

The hearing date and time should be announced this summer.

### National JLWOP Survey Making History

For the first time ever, a research group has taken a nationwide scan of juvenile lifers, made the collected data available online.

*The Lives of Juvenile Lifers* was just released by The Sentencing Project. Author Ashley Nellis said "Most juveniles... (cont. p. 4)

## New Report: Justice System Treats Kids Unfairly

### Unlikely combination of factors result in harsh, uneven, disparate sentences

Michigan is second in the nation in the number of children sentenced to die in prison, and conditions are ripe to make matters much worse, according to a new report.

"**Basic Decency**," from *Second Chances 4 Youth* and the ACLU of Michigan, explores the fiscal and human costs of this sentencing practice. The report takes a hard look at the exceptional use of juvenile life without parole sentences in Michigan, disproportionate punishments and racial disparities.

The report finds a significant difference in the rate of pleas offered to adolescents based on the race of the victim. Youth accused of homicide where the victim was white were 22 percent less likely to receive a plea offer than in cases where the victim was a person of color.

Over 370 youth have been sentenced to life without parole in Michigan, including more than 100 who did not themselves commit a homicide. Read the *Basic Decency* report at [SecondChances4Youth.org](http://SecondChances4Youth.org).

## Supporting Second Chances 4 Youth

Interested in joining the fight against juvenile life? Check [secondchances4youth.org](http://secondchances4youth.org).

The website is a place where supporters of the campaign to end JLWOP can go for information, exchanging info, and networking. There are pages on the site that allow you to share your story, including in video format.

## Your Voice Matters!

Join us in our advocacy work!

You can help by writing to newspapers, websites and to elected officials. Elected officials need to hear that these issues are important to constituents.

We must speak up and make sure that legislators know there are many people who want our young people treated with justice and insight

See our *guidelines on writing an effective letter*, page 4

