



## IN FOCUS

### *Human Rights and Juvenile Life Without Parole*

*Contributed by Sue Simon, Program Manager, and Deji Olukotun, Program Officer, US Human Rights Fund*

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Sentencing youth to prison terms without the possibility of parole is a significant human rights violation. The U.S. is the only country in the world to allow this. In 39 states, youth are denied the opportunity for a second chance, despite behavioral research showing that young people lack adult levels of judgment and impulse control. Nearly 60% of those serving juvenile life sentences without parole (JLWOP) are first time offenders. Youth deserve meaningful and periodic review of their life sentences so those who can prove they are reformed can re-enter society as contributing citizens.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - unratified by the U.S. and Somalia - prohibits life without parole for youth under the age of 18. Organizations like the ACLU of Michigan, the Massachusetts Youth Advocacy Project and the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth -- all grantees of the U.S. Human Rights Fund -- have used policy advocacy, litigation and grassroots organizing to achieve noteworthy victories encompassing human rights values and standards.

This month, the cases of Sullivan and Graham, two Florida youth serving JLWOP, were heard in the Supreme Court. It is hoped the Court will provide some relief. Simultaneously, strong efforts must continue to educate local, state, and federal legislatures about this issue. Donors are encouraged to support this work to secure needed reform.

#### **RESOURCES FOR FUNDERS:**

- 1) The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan [Publications](#)
- 2) [Massachusetts Youth Advocacy Project](#)
- 3) [The Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth](#)

#### **RECENT ARTICLES:**

- 1) [Line Drawn in One Case Dissolves Another](#) - The New York Times
- 2) [Somalia to Ratify "UN-Child Pact"](#) - BBC News
- 3) [Weighing Life in Prison for Youth who Didn't Kill](#) - The New York Times
- 4) [Juvenile Justice and Race: An Uphill Climb to the Bottom](#) - The Huffington Post

*If you would like to discuss grantmaking in this area, we'd be happy to talk with you. Contact Sue Simon at [ssimon@publicinterestprojects.org](mailto:ssimon@publicinterestprojects.org).*