

# Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing

A 14-year-old in the United States

## CAN NOT



**Order an alcoholic drink or purchase cigarettes**



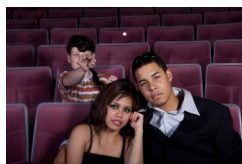
**Cast a Ballot**



**Join the Army**



**Drive a Car**



**Watch Certain Movies**

## CAN



**Be sentenced as an adult to life without the possibility of parole**

- ♦ The United States is the only country in the world to sentence youth to life without parole.
- ♦ There are over 2,500 people serving life without parole sentences for crimes committed in their youth.
- ♦ Scientific brain research has proven that youth have different cognitive skills than adults.
- ♦ Youth in adult facilities are 36 times more likely to commit suicide than youth in juvenile facilities.
- ♦ A life without the possibility of parole sentence for youth is a *guarantee* that they will die in prison.

For More Information:

[www.healingjusticecoalition.org/juvenile\\_justice\\_week.html](http://www.healingjusticecoalition.org/juvenile_justice_week.html)



## Juvenile Justice Week of Faith *and Healing*

### *Prayers of the Faithful*

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1. For all government agencies that they may acknowledge the dignity of each child in their care and treat them with compassion and respect...
  2. For all incarcerated juveniles who are separated from their families, may they know God's love and mercy...
  3. For friends and family members who suffer in the face of crime and incarceration, may peace and comfort fill their hearts...
  4. For those victimized by crime, May God's love and grace give them the strength to heal and the willingness to forgive...
  5. For our parish communities, may we always remember Jesus' invitation to visit the imprisoned when he said, "I was in prison and you visited me" ...
  6. For all of us that we may join in solidarity with our brothers and sisters of other faiths that we may embrace the opportunity to grow in peace and friendship with them and join in this common cause to help our incarcerated youth...
  7. For all chaplains and volunteers who minister to the incarcerated youth, to their families and victims of crime, that we may remain faithful to our call and continue with the strength that only the Lord provides...
  8. For probation staff, those responsible for incarcerated youth, may they care for them as a child of God—with delicacy, grace and wisdom...
  9. For all of us, may God's presence in our lives remind us of those who suffer physically, emotionally, and that we may not forget the past but build, together, a future based on love, forgiveness and understanding for all of our youth...
  10. For all of us that we may remember, first last and always that we are all God's children and that we have God's spirit within us...



## Semana de Justicia Juvenil y Sanación

### Oraciones de los Fieles

Por todas las agencias del gobierno que reconozcan la dignidad de cada joven que está bajo su cuidado y que los traten con compasión y respeto....

Por los jóvenes encarcelados quienes están separados de sus familias, que conozcan el amor y misericordia de Dios....

Por los amigos y familias quienes sufren ante el crimen y encarcelamiento, que la paz conforte y llene sus corazones...

Por los que son víctimas del crimen, que la gracia y el amor de Dios les de la fuerza para sanar y voluntad para perdonar...

Por nuestras comunidades parroquiales, que siempre nos recordemos de la invitación de Jesús a visitar a los prisioneros cuando dijo “estuve encarcelado y me visitaste”...

Por todos nosotros, que nos unamos en solidaridad con nuestros hermanos y hermanas de otras tradiciones de fe para que podamos abrazar la oportunidad de crecer en paz y amistad con ellos y que nos unamos en esta causa común para ayudar a nuestros jóvenes encarcelados...

Por los capellanes y voluntarios quienes trabajan y sirven a los jóvenes encarcelados, a sus familias y a las víctimas del crimen, que se mantengan fieles a nuestro llamado y continúen con la fuerza que solo El Señor nos da...



Por los empleados de las cárceles y por aquellos que son responsables por el bienestar de los jóvenes prisioneros, que los cuiden como hijos de Dios- con delicadeza, gracia y sabiduría...

Por todos nosotros, que la presencia de Dios en nuestras vidas nos haga recordar a aquellos que sufren físicamente y emocionalmente, y que construyamos juntos un futuro basado en el amor, el perdón y el entendimiento para todos nuestros jóvenes...

Por todos nosotros que nos recordemos primero, ultimo y siempre que todos somos hijos de Dios y que el espíritu de Dios habita en nosotros...

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ

**And God made you mates from yourselves, and made you children and grandchildren from your mates, and provided for you of the wholesome things, will they then believe in falsehood, denying the kindness of God? (16:72)**

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وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَدُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

**O Lord! Grant us delight in our spouses and children, and help us to be a model among those who are conscious of You.” (25:74)**

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These two verses reflect on the priceless gifts that the Most Compassionate God Almighty has bestowed upon us – the gift of children and grandchildren.

Our most grateful response toward this awesome gift of children & grandchildren ought to be ;

- In our gratefulness to God Almighty for His awesome gifts
- In our absolute commitment to take care of these gifts by protecting & sheltering them
- By being a source of comfort and means to their needs
- By helping them reach their full potential
- And, most importantly making our lives revolve around their well being

Brothers & Sisters – as people of faith and people of conscience, we most regrettably are living in a society that seems to have misplaced our priorities, almost completely.

Children seem to have become the last and not the first priority of our society.

This is best demonstrated by virtue of our dismal record in protecting them ...

- records indicate that a child is killed in gunfire about every three hours
- data reveals some startling facts – here are some to lament on ...

- More than 13 million children are poor
- About 9 million without health insurance
- About 1 million are victims of abuse and neglect
- More than 10 million live on subsistence levels

- We spend about \$8K p/child on education & 3 times more (\$25K) p/child prisoner

Further more ...

- Our State of California leads in imprisoning adults & children – here’s some shocking data
- 1 out of every 10 prisoners are incarcerated in the State of California

- By the time I finish my Khutba today – about 25 “children” would have been arrested for crimes that could have been avoided – had we paid attention to their well being to start with

- And the list goes on of our near total insensitivity toward what we’d be completely sensitive to – i.e. to care for *our* future.

I like us also to reflect on the disparity in our justice system in light of what Quran tells us ...

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ  
أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أُولَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا  
تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلُوتُوا أَوْ تَعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا  
تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin and whether it be against rich or poor: For Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that you do. (Nisa, 135)

The Wall Street robs the nation in broad daylight – but no one goes to jail.

The previous administration gets our own 4000+ soldiers killed who killed a million innocent Iraqis for a war that could have been avoided completely – and no one goes to jail.

A child in the State of California – out of hunger, desperation, lack of direction, in absence of parental love, care and supervision – indulges into adventuring by shoplifting a loaf of bread or is manipulated by the adults to sell a gram of cocaine & goes to jail for years!

Do we see any ethical disparity in this?

We are commanded by God Almighty to stand “firmly for justice” and against anyone and everyone & today we know that our “justice system” metes out more injustice than justice -particularly in case of children.

As people of faith & people of conscience, brothers & sisters we have a responsibility & an urgent one - toward this most awesome gift from the Most Compassionate God Almighty.

We are reminded by Prophet Muhammad (blessings & peace be upon him) that the **“best of you are those who are best to your family”**

Question we ought to ask ourselves is am I the parent who is best to my family – am I the citizen who cares for my own & other children – is the community & society that I live in is the one who takes care of “all” the families and not ‘some’ ... have we abdicated our responsibilities or embraced our obligations?

These important & urgent questions are the need of the day, my dear brothers & sisters.

As a nation we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars for death & destruction in Iraq, now more so in Afghanistan but did not have enough to provide shelter, healthcare and education to our own children & instead we throw them behind bars & for life.

As a nation we chose to remain blind to the billions & hundreds of millions of tax dollars as bonuses to the Wall Street while voiceless children & their helpless parents and grandparents are being denied of their family life.

As a nation that claims itself to be the ‘richest’ and ‘most powerful’ of the planet – how can we possible reconcile the disparity in our priorities.

Brothers & Sisters – as people of faith & conscience, we ought to uphold **“the God granted dignity and right of every child born to Adam”** (*“laqad karramna bani Adam”*) – and not only for some children ...

Brothers & Sisters – as tax paying citizens of this country – we ought to hold the perpetrators of the crimes of highest magnitude by their neglect of our children – responsible ...

Brothers & Sisters – as members of a human society – we ought not to ask whose child it is but rather embrace each one of them - with a name or no name – with a parent or none as ours & our own ...

Let us remember what Prophet Muhammad (blessings & peace be upon him) reminded us that those **“who take care of the orphans will accompany him just as twin fingers in the best of heavens in the eternal life hereafter.”**

Let us remember that it is most noble to give before we are asked for it ...

Let us remember that our gratefulness to God’s awesome gifts is to protect them ..

Let us remember that children are a mighty & priceless blessing to us and not a curse ..

Let us remember as parents & guardians of our imperative to be a source of comfort to them ..

Let us remember that we’ll be remembered by our care & concern for the voiceless

Let us remember that our joy is in giving rather than in receiving

Let us remember that in God, we seek refuge and find strength in reclaiming and restoring the lost rights of His most awesome creation and gift to us - our children

In closing, my dear brothers & sisters, I like you all to take a minute or two & call your state senator & ask them to support SB 399 – the Fair Sentencing for Youth Act.

Shura Council has joined this weekend with many faith groups in asking our legislators to embrace a law that helps restore the dignity and honor of a child rather than we treat a child as a criminal even before they get to fully experience the age of innocence.

Let us together engage in this noble struggle to defend those who are defenseless, to give voice to those who are voiceless and to be a reason of smile and joys to those who are full of tears and without hope – their voiceless cries must be heard because in it is our salvation and in them is our present & future!

Amen.



### Juvenile Justice Week of Faith *and Healing*

"Source of Creation, author of Life and Death,  
From Biblical times forward our tradition has taught us, "Justice,  
justice shall you pursue," and so let us have the courage to pursue  
justice in our own homes and our own communities. We are taught that all  
human beings are created in the Divine image and as such are challenged  
to bring Godliness into the world by who we are and how we act with one  
another. You God have commanded us to act as you would act - to lift up  
the fallen as You have lifted us up, to heal the sick in body and spirit  
as You are the Source of Healing, to free the captives as You have  
redeemed us "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm" from the  
enslavements of our past and the exploitations of our history. And so  
we pray for those most vulnerable in our society and ask for the courage  
to stand up to champion their humanity and celebrate the spark of  
holiness that shines within each of us. On this Juvenile Justice  
Shabbat, may we rededicate ourselves to bringing justice to those most  
in need and to being beacons of light in the darkness of their  
imprisonment."

Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben, Ph.D.





## Juvenile Justice Week of Faith and Healing

### *Prayer for Justice*

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#### ***Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, where there is hatred let me sow love***

God of love, we gather with hopeful hearts. We ask you to give us your wisdom to always know what you are calling us to do and to be. We ask for the courage we need to bring your peace into the communities and facilities where violence has a strong foothold. Help us, as your instruments, to bring your message that we belong to each other. Guide us in our efforts to make sure that love is always the answer.

#### ***Where there is injury, let me sow pardon***

God of compassion, help us always to reach out to those who are most in need of a gentle touch. We recognize that you have created us as one family, walking together through life. Help us to be there for each other especially when one of our family members is in pain and sorrowing. Help us to be reminders that you are always ready to heal, to forgive, to comfort.

#### ***Where there is doubt, let me sow faith***

God of justice, give us your wisdom to advocate for laws that truly restore our communities, heal our divisions, stop neighborhood violence, and result in communities where all people are respected and no one has to live in fear. Let us be powerful signs to others of your presence so that no one can doubt that you are in our midst caring for us.

#### ***Where there is despair, let me sow hope***

God of courage and strength, help us to stand up for the rights of those in need of a stronger voice on their behalf. Help us to work together to ensure that the rights of victims become the law of our state and our country. Help us to make sure that all of our incarcerated brothers and sisters are given the respect they deserve as your children. Give us what we need to truly support the families of victims and prisoners. Let us be hope for each other by walking together toward the common goals we share.

#### ***Where there is sadness, let me sow joy***

God of gentleness and consolation, we are all members of your family but we have been the cause of harm and sadness to each other. Do not let the sadness overcome us. Let us find a joy in being and working together to make your world the place you created it to be.

#### ***Where there is darkness, let me sow light***

God of light and life, help us to dedicate ourselves to ensuring that no one else loses a loved one to violence or prison. Let us become people of life, not death, people of light, not darkness, people of restoration, not revenge, one family united to insure that there are no more victims. Let the candle of hope burn in the hearts of each one of us. And, together as one family, we can dispel the darkness that surrounds us.