Dear friends,

Children do not belong in adult jails or prisons. That is what we believe at the Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project (YSRP), and we are proud to be entering our fifth year as an organization in pursuit of this vision.

We are pleased to share with you this report, which captures YSRP’s growth and accomplishments over the past two years (2017-2018). Our work is largely about storytelling, and the pages that follow tell the story of our journey, of our working with youth facing charges in Philadelphia’s adult criminal justice system—and with the men and women who were unconstitutionally sentenced, as children, to spend the rest of their lives in prison. We also tell the story of a righteous community of advocates, activists, volunteers, and funders who have supported our efforts and propelled this work forward.

This is racial justice work. Philadelphia has an unforgivable history of criminal justice overreach. As a city, we have unconstitutionally sentenced more children to spend the rest of their lives in prison without parole than any other place on earth; this happened in all of our names. Virtually all the youth charged as adults in Philadelphia are youth of color. For those facing the most extreme sentences, the disparity is stunning: youth of color are ten times more likely to be sentenced to life without parole than are white youth. Daily, we are confronted with the impacts of a fundamentally racist system. Daily, we seek to infuse context and humanity into this system in an effort to counterbalance those impacts.

Since our founding in 2014, we have provided comprehensive mitigation and reentry advocacy and advice in more than one hundred cases. As we embark on our sixth year, we are excited to continue expanding YSRP’s impact by taking on cases in counties immediately surrounding Philadelphia, by deepening our commitment to reentry service provision as we welcome more youth and juvenile lifers home, and by pursuing an aggressive policy advocacy agenda. We have made tremendous progress, but our work is far from done. We need your support to keep the momentum going. Join us in this movement to lift up the humanity of those who are too often, and too easily, discarded and labeled as “the worst of the worst.” We hope that what you read here will inspire you to do so.

With deep gratitude,

Lauren Fine, Esq.
Co-Director
Joanna Visser Adjoian, Esq.
Co-Director

Facing page: Lauren Fine (left) and Joanna Visser Adjoian (right), YSRP co-founders and Co-Directors
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2017-2018 Report
2 Letter from the Co-Directors
7 Scott’s Story
12 Our Case Advocacy Model
14 Isheem’s Story
16 Our Reentry Model
19 Raequan’s Story
27 Our Work in the News
30 Financial Activity
31 Our Donors
36 Our Leadership
Philadelphia has sentenced more children to spend the rest of their lives in prison than any other city on the planet.

300+ children in Philadelphia
500+ children in Pennsylvania
2,000+ children across the country

Our context

Pennsylvania has a long history of imposing the harshest sentences on children accused of serious crimes. Nationally, more than 2,000 individuals were given unconstitutional automatic sentences of life in prison without the possibility of parole as children (so-called “juvenile lifers”). Pennsylvania is responsible for sentencing more than 500 juvenile lifers.

Philadelphia sentenced a staggering 300 juvenile lifers. Philadelphia has sentenced more children to spend the rest of their lives in prison than any other city on the planet.

Philadelphia is also the poorest big city in the country, with more than 25% of residents living in poverty, and the highest per capita incarceration rate. An estimated one in three Philadelphians has some kind of criminal record.

Racial injustice pervades the system here. For youth of color charged as adults, the outcomes are deplorable.

In Pennsylvania, youth of color are ten times as likely to be sentenced to life without parole than are white youth.

In spite of these grim distinctions, the landscape in Philadelphia is transforming.

Our mission

The Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project (YSRP) uses direct service and policy advocacy to transform the experiences of children prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system, and to ensure fair and thoughtful resentencing and reentry for individuals who were sentenced to life without parole as children (“juvenile lifers”). We partner with court-involved youth and juvenile lifers, their families, and lawyers to develop holistic, humanizing narratives that mitigate the facts of each case; get cases transferred to the juvenile system or resentenced; and make crucial connections to community resources providing education, healthcare, housing, and employment. Our ultimate goals are to keep children out of adult jails and prisons and to enhance the quality of representation juvenile lifers receive at resentencing, and as they prepare to reenter the community.
Scott’s Story

In 1982, Scott was 16 years old when he was involved in a crime in which a man tragically lost his life. A short time later, and still a teenager, Scott was automatically sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison.

Coming Home

An increasing number of former “juvenile lifers” are coming home to Philadelphia. These men and women, who were told as children that they would never leave prison, contribute to our city on a daily basis.

January 25, 2018 was the second anniversary of the landmark 2016 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Montgomery v. Louisiana. This decision rendered retroactive the Court’s earlier decision in Miller v. Alabama (2012) that mandatorily sentencing youth to life in prison without the possibility of parole is unconstitutional.

This momentous decision offered the first opportunity for the now-grown men and women, locked away as children, to receive new sentences and potentially return home from prison after decades of incarceration. YSRP celebrated the anniversary with the growing community of former juvenile lifers who are now home, and their loved ones who awaited their return for far too long. The joy was palpable.
Scott was incarcerated for the next 35 years of his life. Despite being told that he may never leave prison, Scott worked hard to earn his GED, which he accomplished just a couple of years into his imprisonment. His faith became increasingly important to him, and he successfully completed many courses rooted in faith during his decades behind bars. In spite of the inhumane conditions in prison, Scott took pride in his work, and was consistently employed in maintenance, cleaning and tending to the grounds of the State Correctional Institution at Graterford.

The Montgomery decision in 2016 provided Scott with his first real chance to actualize his vision for a full life outside of prison walls. YSRP partnered with Scott to prepare a detailed mitigation report for the Parole Board that revealed details of his difficult childhood, including the loss of his mother when he was just 6 months old. The report also illuminated the impact of learning struggles he faced in school.

Further, the report highlighted Scott’s multiple accomplishments in prison, including earning his GED, and his engaged participation in programs that paved the way for his extensive personal transformation. Together, we articulated a plan for Scott’s life post-incarceration, that included his job prospects and the supports he would leverage to thrive in the community.

More than anything, Scott wanted the chance to come home and live with his wife Anna. In July 2017, Scott received a new sentence, and returned home after 35 years in prison.

Scott and Anna met roller skating when they were 14 years old. The couple was married in a prison ceremony in 2015, 35 years after they met. Scott had become an important part of Anna’s daughter’s (his step-daughter’s) life, especially since the passing of her own father a few years earlier.

Long denied the opportunities available to most teenagers, Scott has experienced so many “firsts” since returning home, including swimming in the ocean.

Scott was almost 52 when he got his driver’s license. He is proud to drive himself to work every day. On November 6, 2018, he voted for the first time.

YSRP has stood shoulder to shoulder with Scott as he navigates his new life at home.

Since coming home, Scott is thriving. He is working as a boom lift operator, and has received a promotion as a mark of his commitment and dedication to his work.

Scott and his wife Anna recently bought a house. They celebrated this past Christmas in their new home, surrounded by family, including their new granddaughter (another first for him).

We are confident that Scott will continue to thrive in the community, and we could not be prouder to stand beside him as he lives his fullest life.
The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated and the condemned.”

– Bryan Stevenson, Founder and Executive Director of The Equal Justice Initiative and The National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the accompanying Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration

“I wanted to write back to thank you for the work you all did on my defense. I couldn’t have gotten a better mitigation team than YSRP. I don’t believe there is anybody who could have brought out and told my story as thorough, detailed and elegant as you all did. Thank you for taking my case. I am truly humbled by your kind.”

— Norman Bryant, a juvenile lifer client-partner, in an email dated January 25, 2017, on the first anniversary of the Montgomery decision
Connection from the courtroom to the community

YSRP’s case advocacy model is rooted in partnership, and builds on the innate strengths and resilience of our client-partners.

We partner with young people (under 18) who face charges in the adult criminal justice system, with the goal of avoiding adult jails and prisons, and with juvenile lifers. Where a sentence must be imposed, we seek individualized outcomes that take into account a person’s full humanity, and that reduce the imposition, duration, and impact of adult criminal sentences on young people and their families.

We believe that young people and juvenile lifers are the experts of their own lived experiences and that their voices and their communities should be central to their court proceedings. We utilize a technique that is often employed in death penalty cases to center the voices of our client-partners: mitigation.

Together, the mitigation narrative, reentry plan and letters of support combine to form comprehensive mitigation reports that we submit, as part of the defense team, to a prosecutor and/or a judge who is responsible for making sentencing decisions about our client-partners.

For our youth client-partners, we present the comprehensive mitigation report to the prosecutors and judges who decide whether to “decertify” youths’ cases to the juvenile system or whether to continue their cases in adult court. Our goal is to have cases moved out of adult court and into juvenile court, and for sentencing to be individualized and incorporate community-based alternatives to incarceration. Although imperfect, the juvenile system is far better equipped to support youth’s educational, emotional and physical health needs than is the adult system.

For our juvenile lifer client-partners, mitigation reports are submitted to the prosecutors, judges and Parole Board members who decide whether to allow a chance for them to return home after decades of incarceration. Our goal is to achieve fair and thoughtful new sentences that are individualized, and take into account time served.

"Mitigation" is, essentially, the telling of one’s life story. We partner with youth and juvenile lifers to tell their stories—about who they are, and where they come from. We interview family members, friends, teachers, doctors, coaches, social workers—anyone who can illustrate a more realistic, detailed picture of a youth’s life experience, or a juvenile lifer’s early life and adjustment to prison. We gather and incorporate medical, educational and other records. We set this story within the context of the developing adolescent brain and the relevant case law that speaks to the unique characteristics of youth. We also collect letters from family members, community members and service providers.

"Reentry plans" detail a person’s potential to reach their goals. We partner with youth and juvenile lifers to tell their stories—about what their goals and aspirations are, and who they have the potential to become in the community. We increase access to, and build on, a person’s existing connections with physical and emotional health support and services, housing, education, employment opportunities and job training/placement programs.

In June of 2012, the US Supreme Court held in Miller v. Alabama that mandatory life without parole sentences are unconstitutional for those under 18 years old. The ruling built on the 2010 decision in Graham v. Florida, and focused on the growing body of developmental research that demonstrates how children—including those who commit violent crimes—possess a greater capacity for rehabilitation than do adults, and are categorically less culpable for their criminal conduct. Neuroscience supports these rulings, and recent research suggests that the adolescent brain may not be fully developed until the age of 25.

In 94% of our youth cases, we have prevented a young person from going to adult prison.
Isheem’s Story

Isheem has all the promise and potential of realizing his dream of becoming a professional football player in the near future. Courted by some of the best college football programs in the country, with full ride scholarship offers from 33 universities, Isheem’s future screeched to a halt when, at the age of 17, he was involved in an incident for which he was charged in the adult criminal justice system.

YSRP began working with Isheem while he was being held in the adult jail on State Road in Philadelphia. From those who know him best, we heard repeatedly that Isheem is a leader who can inspire others. From his family, we learned that Isheem had to grow up quickly, taking on many responsibilities caring for his family and those around him.

He supported his family while juggling his schoolwork, training and work-outs for football at increasingly competitive levels. His superior athletic ability was recognized by football recruiters before he started high school. He has been described by his coaches as a “once in a lifetime” athletic talent. More importantly, they describe his “exceptional personal and leadership potential.”

While he awaited the court’s determination, Isheem graduated from high school. During that time, we partnered with Isheem, his defense attorney and the team of supportive adults he had long forged relationships with—his extended family members, coaches from before and during high school, and other mentors of his who had taken him under their wing—to present the prosecutor and judge in adult court with a much fuller picture of who Isheem is, and the extent of his future goals and potential. This led to his case being “decertified” to juvenile court. There, Isheem was ordered to spend several months in juvenile placement.

Because Isheem successfully avoided the burdens of an adult criminal conviction, he continued to receive scholarship offers from colleges and universities. YSRP has continued to work closely with Isheem’s high school coaches, the college coaches who recruited him, and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) staff to ensure that Isheem will continue on his path to a college education. We know Isheem is capable of greatness, and we look forward to standing by his side and cheering him on in all of his future successes.

“Isheem has always had a magnetic, engaging personality. Throughout high school, I saw him develop into a thoughtful peer leader. He is impressive on the field, but off the field his personality and potential really shine through. Isheem helps motivate other players. Once he realized the impact he could have as a leader, he started taking a strong role in managing practice and team dynamics. If a player is having a tough day or acting out, Isheem will talk to him to get practice or the workout back on track. When Isheem sees teammates struggle with workouts, plays, or focusing, he will speak with them and help them through whatever they are struggling with.”

— Devon Johnson, one of Isheem’s coaches from Imhotep Institute Charter High School

Spring 2017: Isheem pictured with his mother, Nicole, celebrating at a football banquet at his high school.

Due to the offense he was charged with, Isheem faced a potential sentence of up to 45 years in adult prison.
Reentry planning allows a judge to consider the strengths of an individual and their future goals, alongside community-based services and programs that will work with the person when they come home to heal and achieve their goals.

Connection through return to the community

YSRP’s reentry model is rooted in partnership, and builds on the goals our client-partners set for their futures.

We partner with youth (whose cases originate in the adult criminal justice system) and with juvenile lifers who will return home, and who already have returned home, and connect them with the support and opportunities they need to thrive in the community.

We co-create reentry plans with every young person and juvenile lifer with whom we partner at the earliest possible stage of their court proceedings.

As they prepare to return home, we support our client-partners and their families to live their plans by making referrals to well-vetted community providers that will allow them to access housing, physical and mental health care, education, employment and other services.

REENTRY FOR JUVENILE LIFERS

Reentry for juvenile lifers, as compared with other adults returning to the community from jails and prisons, is unique. All of Philadelphia’s more than 300 juvenile lifers entered prison as teenagers, and are now returning to a city that has advanced in significant, and high-tech, ways. Now in their 40s, 50s and 60s, former juvenile lifers are returning to neighborhoods and communities that have completely transformed, and are looking for work, places to live and opportunities to engage with the community.

In recognition of the expertise needed to support juvenile lifers returning home, YSRP welcomed John Pace as our first-ever Juvenile Life Without Parole Reentry Coordinator in November 2017. A former juvenile lifer himself, John works with men and women coming home to co-navigate their return home, connect them with resources, and ensure they have access to opportunities to thrive.

John and other juvenile lifers are being recognized for their wealth of experience in significant ways. John has been called upon as an expert to testify at resentencing hearings for other juvenile lifers about the possibilities that await them in their return to the community.

YSRP partnered with eight former juvenile lifers, including two of our client-partners, in December 2017, to offer a reentry workshop for juvenile lifers at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford (now SCI-Phoenix) who are preparing for their eventual reentry. This "reach back" process created powerful dialogue, allowed for authentic information to be shared and concerns to be addressed, and strengthened community connections inside and out.

Reentry planning allows a judge to consider the strengths of an individual and their future goals, alongside community-based services and programs that will work with the person when they come home to heal and achieve their goals.
Reentry Support

Networks that Activate. Support that Surrounds.

YSRP staff and volunteers build authentic relationships with our client-partners. Sometimes, we remain in close contact with our client-partners for several years after our initial meeting.

Our approach to reentry is rooted in self-determination, partnership, strength and resilience. Because reentry is a process that occurs in present tense, we have no set time period by which our client-partners have fully “reentered” the community.

“Thank you for not giving up on me and being there for me and having my back through everything.”

—Yami Ramirez, a young woman with whom YSRP partnered when she was 17 and being held in functional solitary confinement at the adult jail for women in Philadelphia.

Raequan’s Story

Raequan has an entrepreneurial spirit. Matthew and Katherine, then law and graduate social work students, respectively, easily got that sense, along with YSRP’s staff, the first time they met Raequan more than two years ago.

Together, they met Raequan when he was just 17 years old and being held at an adult jail in Philadelphia. Raequan spent a total of 18 months in adult jail before coming home.

Matthew, Katherine, and YSRP staff visited Raequan regularly throughout his incarceration. In partnership with Raequan and his mother, they prepared for his homecoming, surfacing Raequan’s interests and identifying goals he wanted to pursue when he came home. Most especially, Raequan was interested in participating in job training programs that would allow him to pursue higher education.

Raequan’s mother lives in public housing, and the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) was adamant that Raequan not be let back on her lease due to their restrictions barring individuals with certain felony convictions from living in public housing. Raequan was then only 18 years old, and eager to return home to live with his loving and supportive mother. YSRP contacted our partners at Community Legal Services and, together, provided sustained advocacy for Raequan so that he would not face the prospect of homelessness.

In August 2017, as Raequan was about to leave jail and move back home to his mother’s apartment, he hit a major roadblock.

In June 2018: Yami is pictured in Center City, Philadelphia, following her high school graduation from YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School.

In April 2018: Raequan delivers a presentation on lead remediation.

In August 2017, as Raequan was about to leave jail and move back home to his mother’s apartment, he hit a major roadblock.

In June 2018: Yami is pictured in Center City, Philadelphia, following her high school graduation from YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School.

In April 2018: Raequan delivers a presentation on lead remediation.
eventually acquiesced after concerted efforts, and Raequan was able to return home to live with his mother.

Once home, YSRP connected Raequan with PowerCorpsPHL, a job training program that gave him hands-on professional experience learning how to maintain stormwater drainage systems, manage an inventory of tools and support a 9-member team that completed projects with the City’s Water Department. PowerCorpsPHL then connected Raequan with an internship with Clean Water Action, where he supported a public education and advocacy campaign about the dangers of lead paint and lead poisoning. Throughout the spring of 2018, Raequan gave presentations about lead remediation, including to a group of over 20 attendees. YSRP attended one of his trainings, proud to see Raequan own his role as a leader and educator.

Last summer, Raequan and his mother moved to another apartment within PHA after months on a waitlist. Matthew was there to help out on moving day. When Raequan told him their refrigerator stopped working, YSRP tapped into its network, located a new refrigerator and delivered one to Raequan and his mother.

Raequan finished his 6-month internship with Clean Water Action over the summer. With his eye on college and on activating his dream of owning his own business one day, YSRP nominated Raequan for a new fellowship program that will invest in his leadership, while also allowing him to pursue college and other work at the same time. YSRP stood alongside Raequan as he prepared for the competitive selection process. We were thrilled when Raequan was offered, and accepted, his fellowship.

Raequan continues to mature into the motivated and driven young man that we met from the start. His resilience, through the many challenges he faced prior to his incarceration and after, is boundless. We at YSRP, including Matthew and Katherine, could not be more impressed with the thoughtful and hilarious young man that Raequan has become, and we plan to continue standing by his side as he encounters any future roadblocks, and as he achieves every success.

Matthew

Matthew Feldman met Raequan in his first year of law school while Raequan was incarcerated. A dedicated volunteer with the Youth Advocacy Project, Matthew prepared Raequan’s mitigation report and stayed connected to him long after his return home. Matthew has many fond memories of his time working with Raequan, from the day Raequan told him he’d completed his GED in jail to watching him give a presentation on lead poisoning at his job, to Raequan’s first time trying sushi. He looks forward to continuing to be a part of Raequan’s life as he gets himself ready for college and beyond. Matthew received his JD from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 2018 and is the Penn Law / Langer, Grogan, & Diver Social Justice Fellow at the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project in Philadelphia, where he is working with incarcerated individuals and families of murder victims.

Katherine

Katherine Scholle met Raequan in her first year of social work school while he was incarcerated. A dedicated volunteer with the Youth Advocacy Project, Katherine prepared Raequan’s mitigation report, built a strong partnership with Raequan, and has stayed connected to him long after his return home. She looks up to Raquan for his incredible resilience, and cannot wait to see the day that Raequan graduates from college—or does what he finds most fulfilling. Katherine received her MSW from the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Policy & Practice in 2017. She is a licensed social worker in Philadelphia, where she works as a Clinical Supervisor in the Chemical Dependency Unit at Fairmount Behavioral Health.
In January 2018, on the 2nd anniversary of the Montgomery v. Louisiana U.S. Supreme Court decision, YSRP launched a first-of-its-kind online tool to assist juvenile lifers, lawyers, mitigation specialists, and family members in Pennsylvania with planning for and navigating reentry by locating housing, healthcare, education and life skills programs and services in the counties where they are returning home.

There are three main ways to use the Navigator.

First, users can complete an anonymous questionnaire that tailors reentry resource information to their needs and location. Second, users can browse resources by county and, third, they can search for specific services. For example, someone who needs housing can look for housing programs, as well as where to find furniture and help with rent or utilities.

Over time, the Navigator will be updated and evolve in response to users’ needs.

YSRP Launches JLWOP Reentry Navigator

The Pennsylvania JLWOP Reentry Navigator is an online tool for use on computers, smartphones and tablets, that helps juvenile lifers as they return to their communities across Pennsylvania to locate crucial services such as housing, employment, and education to aid in their reentry process. The Navigator can be accessed at pajlwop.ysrp.org.

YSRP consulted with juvenile lifers through workshops in nearly every prison across Pennsylvania to create the Navigator. The 14 resource categories reflect their concerns, interests, and needs. The Navigator offers information about 730 resources across each of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties. The Navigator is also designed for use by their loved ones, attorneys, and advocates.

Life After Life

YSRP has been a proud supporter of John Pace’s role building power within Life After Life, a group of former juvenile lifers who engage in community organizing, storytelling and mentorship in Philadelphia.

Life After Life seeks to build leadership skills and advocate for changes in narrative and in policy related to the extreme sentencing of children, primarily children of color, as adults.

Life After Life continues to transform the narrative about who juvenile lifers are and are capable of being on the outside. The powerful voice and advocacy from former juvenile lifers has compounded the groundswell of support for a new day in Philadelphia’s movement for criminal justice reform.

As this community grows, the potential for progressive, authentic influence in the policy arena is palpable.

Summer 2017: Life After Life members pictured at a regular monthly meeting in Philadelphia.
Jail Removal

YSRP strives to center the voices and actions of directly-affected people in challenging the policies and practices that fail them, their loved ones, families and communities.

Since our inception, YSRP has collaborated with our client-partners and with our partner organizations to improve the conditions for young people charged in the adult criminal justice system.

Since 2017, we have collaborated with our partners at the Defender Association of Philadelphia, Juvenile Law Center, the Youth Art & Self-empowerment Project, and, since 2018, the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office to end the practice of holding youth in adult jails pre-trial in Philadelphia. As they are pre-trial, these young people have not yet been convicted of anything, nor has a judge decided whether the adult system is the most appropriate venue for their cases to be heard.

Our campaign has made headway with local elected officials, and we will press on until young people are no longer being held in adult jails pre-trial. Concerted and ongoing advocacy is needed to ensure that the dignity, humanity and developmental needs of young people are upheld when they are confined under any circumstances.

Fines & Fees

YSRP, with partners, pressures Philadelphia’s Department of Human Services to stop charging parents for their children’s incarceration.

YSRP’s Co-Directors fell quiet in June 2015 as they read a letter that Kameelah Davis-Spears, the parent of one of our youth client-partners, slid across her kitchen table to them in West Philadelphia. Incredulous, Joanna and Lauren learned that the City of Philadelphia was suing her for the cost of her son’s incarceration in a private juvenile placement.

In the following days, YSRP’s Co-Directors heard from another parent that he, too, was being taken to court by the City for the cost of his son’s incarceration in the juvenile justice system. Shocked by this practice, YSRP partnered with the Justice Lab at the Sheller Center for Social Justice Lab at Temple University —with law students Sela Cowger, Kelsey Grimes, Wesley Stevenson and Professor Colleen Shanahan—to investigate the origins of this unjust practice, and push for a moratorium to it.

Justice at Temple Law School—with law students Sela Cowger, Kelsey Grimes, Wesley Stevenson and Professor Colleen Shanahan—to investigate the origins of this unjust practice, and push for a moratorium to it. Our report built the case for ending the practice of charging parents for their kids’ imprisonment.
As we investigated further, we learned there were hundreds of parents who had been subjected to this harmful practice over decades. Our investigation culminated in the production of a report, Double Punishment, calling on the Philadelphia Department of Human Services could offer testimony related to the practice of charging parents for the cost of their children’s incarceration. National attention was brought to the issue, and to the hearing, due to media coverage by The Washington Post, The Philadelphia Inquirer and, locally, by 6abc.

Through our concerted advocacy efforts, Philadelphia City Council Member Kenyatta Johnson planned a special hearing at which directly-impacted parents, advocates and the Department of Human Services could offer testimony related to the practice of charging parents for the cost of their children’s incarceration. National attention was brought to the issue, and to the hearing, due to media coverage by The Washington Post, The Philadelphia Inquirer and, locally, by The Inquirer.

On Friday, March 3, 2017, in advance of the planned City Council Hearing, the Department of Human Services announced it would stop billing parents for their children’s incarceration costs.

This announcement ended a more than 20-year-old practice in Philadelphia, and means that no new parents will be faced with the damaging imposition of these costs that Kameelah and thousands of other parents have been forced to pay over the past two-plus decades.

YSRP testified at the hearing to make clear that we would be monitoring the implementation of this new policy to ensure that no new families have to endure this double punishment— that the practice truly ends, and does not reemerge under a different guise. The most important testimony at the hearing came from Kameelah. She brought this issue to our attention and saw it through to an actual change in the way that the Department of Human Services does business.

We are so grateful to Kameelah for having the courage to speak up about a practice that has affected thousands of Philadelphia’s families, and to the Justice Lab students for their commitment to uncovering and ending this practice. On this issue, we applaud Philadelphia for standing on the right side of justice.
New tool helps juvenile lifers navigate reentry
to a dramatically different world
by Joanna Visser Adjoian and Lauren Fine
– 2/28/2018

The need for the Navigator grew out of training we conducted inside of nearly every prison in the state with juvenile lifers. We asked what concerns they had about reentering society, and what questions they had about navigating life on the outside. The Navigator responds directly to these questions and concerns, and now exists as a resource to support folks planning to return home, as well as those who have already returned.

Read more at https://ysrp.org/2-28/

Dozens of prisoners, locked up since they were children, are returning home to Philadelphia
Reporter Joyce Evans profiles the reentry process of Philadelphia’s juvenile lifers.
Watch the full segment at https://ysrp.org/7-25-2017/

Your child’s been sent to jail. And then comes the bill
by Eli Hager
– 3/2/2017

Groups of law students, juvenile defense lawyers and others have begun to challenge this payment system, arguing that it is akin to taxing parents for their child’s loss of liberty — and punishing them with debt. In Philadelphia, the City Council is meeting Friday to consider abolishing the practice.

Read more at ysrp.org/3-2-2017/

Under fire, Philly stops suing parents of incarcerated kids for child support
by Samantha Melamed, Reporter – 3/3/2017

“People are having to make choices you would hope no parent would have to make,” YSRP co-founder Lauren Fine said. One father told YSRP he had debated whether to advocate for his son’s case to be moved from adult to juvenile court. Though juvenile court would be a better outcome for his son, it would mean he would be charged child support he couldn’t afford. At the hearing, Kamwoleah Davis-Spears, a mother of four who works 62 hours a week at a low-wage security job, told Council how the city garnishes $13.71, plus a $2 processing fee, from her weekly check. The West Philadelphia woman said that was the end to pizza night for her kids, their one luxury after climbing out of deep poverty and living in shelters. ‘I can’t do the little things with my family that are important to us,’ she said.

Read more at ysrp.org/3-3-17/

How Philly goes after the poor for child support, keeping families apart
by Samantha Melamed – 3/3/2017

“CITIZEN”
Malcolm Jenkins’ Criminal Justice Season highlights YSRP’s work. – 11/17/2017

From prison, rapper participates with mom in forum
by Phillip Jackson

Double Punishment: When Parents are Forced to Pay for Detention
Reporter Ronan Farrow profiles the practice in Philadelphia of charging parents for the cost of their children’s incarceration.
Watch the full segment at https://ysrp.org/hbc-nightly-news/

Nation.
John Pace and His Friends Expected to Die in Prison
by Katie Rose Quandt — 11/16/2018

Soon after his homecoming in February 2017, [John] Pace and several others organized a support group where this small community of people — once considered so dangerous they were locked up for life as teenagers — could discuss the challenges of returning to a world that has moved on without them. Now officially named Life After Life, the group has expanded to focus on three additional goals: helping juvenile lifers who remain incarcerated with their upcoming transitions into society; engaging with young people in the community; and working with politicians to enact policy change and sentencing reform.

Read more at ysrp.org/11-16/

GOOD LAW | BAD LAW
Mandatory Life Sentences
Hosted by Aaron Freiwald with guests Joanna Visser Adjoian, John Pace & Giovanni Reid – 10/17/2017
Listen at https://ysrp.org/10-17/

Webcast hosted by YSRP & The Atlantic Center for Capital Representation – 6/13/2017
Watch at ysrp.org/nita/
YSRP has a strong financial position that has sustained our growth over the past five years. Grants and contributions from individuals have supported our growth, and play a vital role in sustaining YSRP's work.

Thank you to all of our donors on the following pages who made charitable gifts or grants from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2018. Your contributions make our work possible.

We have made every effort to list all contributions accurately, and extend our heartfelt gratitude for the generosity and support of our donors. Equally, we extend sincere apologies for any mistakes or omissions. To note any corrections, please contact Katie Barnett at kbarnett@ysrp.org.

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If you are interested in reviewing our full financial statements, please contact Katie Barnett at kbarnett@ysrp.org.
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The Youth Advocacy Project (YAP) is a unique pro bono project that launched in 2015 at the University of Pennsylvania Law School that allows law and graduate-level social work students from the School of Social Policy & Practice (SP2) to train in our model of case advocacy, and support our youth client-partners with mitigation and reentry supports.

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