

Sample Bulletin

Here is a sample bulletin that can be posted in places of worship

Protecting Hope and Redemption for Our Children

As people of faith we have a moral responsibility to advocate for the most vulnerable in our society, especially our children. We know that all children—even those convicted of serious crimes—have the capacity for redemption and should not be defined by their worst moments.

More than 2,500 youth in the United States have been sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, a sentence that never offers a chance for case review. Unless laws change, these children will die in prison. Most of these individuals had no prior records and committed these crimes alongside adult co-defendants, many of whom received lesser sentences. African American youth are sentenced to life without parole at a per capita rate that is 10 times that of white youth. The United States is the only country in the world that sentences children to die in prison.

Instead of sentencing youth to life in prison without parole, they should be held accountable in an age-appropriate way, with a focus on rehabilitation and reintegration into society. As the recent U.S. Supreme Court *Miller v. Alabama* decision makes clear, youth cannot be considered as culpable as their adult counterparts and must be sentenced as such. The decision eliminated mandatory life without parole sentences for children.

We must continue to advocate for an end to all life without parole sentences for youth. Eliminating this sentence reflects the human dignity of our children that we, as people of faith, are called to protect. Please consider taking action in some of the ways listed below.

1. Support alternative programs that offer positive opportunities to young people – athletics, faith-based sponsored after-school events, tutoring, and literacy programs.
2. Contact your federal representatives. Ask them to ratify the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. For more information see:
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>
3. Support legislation to eliminate life sentences for youth. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its ruling in *Miller v. Alabama*, deemed that mandatory sentences of life in prison without the possibility of parole are unconstitutional when applied to people who were younger than 18 at the time of their crimes. As states create new legislation in the wake of that ruling, it is more important than ever to support positive legislation in your state.
4. Begin the conversation within your community about the manner in which we treat youth convicted of crimes in the United States.
5. Get involved with AMOS in their Court Watching, School Mediation and any other programs that will protect our children.

