

Dear Lawmakers,

Hello, my name is Aurelia Aleman. I want to start by thanking you for your time with this *serious* matter concerning the lives of our youth, (who can be and some of those who are) serving an extreme sentence for juvenile crimes. When most of us hear the word juvenile, we think immature, young, or ignorance. Merriam Webster's dictionary defines juvenile as;

a: physiologically immature or underdeveloped: young; relating to, characteristic of, or suitable for children or young people but, most importantly, reflecting psychological or intellectual immaturity: childish.

The proposal concerning sentence modification for juveniles, defines this. The psychological immaturity of an adolescent is hindered due to lack of experience and knowledge. Inmate 247953, Mr. Marcus Price, is now serving a sentence because this obvious common factor for human development was *not* taken into consideration at the time of his sentencing. Mr. Marcus Price was charged with assault in the first degree with a fireman in 1996, at the of 16 and was given the MAXIMUM sentence of 20 YEARS and on top of that a SENTENCE ENHANCER OF 5 YEARS along with an ADDITIONAL 6 YEARS CONSECUTIVE, for another charge; TOTALING 31 YEARS.

Marcus Price is now 32 years of age. In less than 3 years, Marcus Price would have been incarcerated for *longer* than he has been in society; for a “juvenile” mistake, and a childish bad decision. As you know, being that this is an assault charge he is not eligible to even have his *file reviewed* until he has reached a *minimum of 85%* of his time. With a discharge date of 2027, Marcus will not have is first PED until 2023, he will be 43 years of age, if granted parole, if not he will be 47 years old upon discharge. Under the current law, even after that 85% of his time is served, Marcus is not guaranteed, per say, parole. I am by no means saying that his adolescent mistake was not worth being punished for and nor is Mr. Price however, the extent of his punishment is where we have concern.

Mr. Marcus Price was a child that lack specific nurturing criteria required for adequate growth in human development. Therefore, his growth for this particular stage of development was hindered. As a troubled teen, Mr. Price was a child without any supervision or real structure or guidance. Including himself, Marcus came from a household of ten, his father not being one of them. Unfortunately, his father had an extensive history of drug abuse; his choice of drug was heroin. Marcus was only 12 years old when his father died. A child from a fairly large family, he could not rely on his substance abused father for positive life choices. His older sister tried to do her best for her younger brothers, but she had two young children of her own. As Marcus Price stated to lawmakers earlier in March of this year, he was a kid looking for acceptance and guidance from somewhere, anywhere! Ultimately, the streets opened their arms the widest and he unfortunately, became a “product’ of his environment.

Marcus had recently written a letter to the sentencing commission, stating;

“My immature reasoning in the streets took my dreams away from me. I took my dreams away from me! My dreams were big, but my vision span was short. After being shot four times at age 16 and then receiving a 31 year sentence, I know how it feels to be the victim, because I am one. One of the streets and one after been shot so, I know how the victims feel and what their families are going through and have been through. I empathize with them dearly I now comprehend that my reasoning at that time in my life was all wrong and I know it’s not as simple as an “I am sorry”, because in fact, in some cases, there were lives that were lost! In my case, that’s not the situation; my victim is still living yet, still a victim of my reckless behavior. I just wanted to take this time, to express my deep sincere apologies and let you know I DO regret my actions! If I was able to stop that child from harming another, I would in a flash, but that child no longer exists”.

*“Today I stand honored to be in a position, at 32 years of age, to have the opportunity to address you, because I have been able to understand why wrong is wrong and right is right. As a volunteer of the hospice program, at MacDougal, I have sat with dying inmates and found myself being their dying ear to remorse so, I truly appreciate you allowing me to be heard as a mature adult; a man who has learned what consequences REALLY mean and has learned to take responsibility for his actions and I have. Through this transition of becoming a man, I have learned to make my own decisions for myself and not for everyone else, as I did when I was a teen. As a husband; of a social worker, I have better understanding of what “true honor and character” entails. I am not saying I am a saint, I have done wrong I understand that but, I do take heed to the saying; **“every sinner has a future and every saint has a past”**. I am accepting responsibility for my actions. I just feel that my adolescence and my upbringing, meaning the mitigating factors, should have played a role in my sentencing.*

Ultimately my goal is to have a meaningful opportunity to create positive growth in the lives of many of the kids I see on the 5 o’clock news that resemble, or show signs of the behavior I displayed as a teen. I want to help them! I want to lessen the work load of the victims’ advocates. I want to help others.”

As a Social Work major, minoring in psychology at Southern Connecticut State University, **WE**, as social workers, strongly believe in Erickson’s stages of development. Erickson is a well-respected psychosocial developmental theorist, who explains that in adolescence, (11-20 years old), the life stage of development is identity vs. role confusion. *Adolescence’s try to develop a sense of who they are and where they are going in life and they can become confused on their identity.* Please, take into consideration, Erickson’s stages of development and apply them to the stipulations of our less than fortunate juveniles in our society who may have had difficult lives due to absent parenting or any other unfortunate circumstances, therefore, I advocate for the lives of injustices that they were born into.

I am grateful that there are individuals out there that can empathize with the excessive sentencing that some of our youth received and are still serving a sentence for. 31 years can be

considered by many to be a lifetime and since the individual will already be punished for the rest of their life with a label of a felon, many opportunities are already being limited, therefore allowing the victim to still receive adequate justice, so why are they serving so many years to pay their debt to society without the chance of even having their file reviewed at some point prior to their current parole eligibility date, especially when they have maintained an obedient role as an inmate for a number of years.

The potential of freedom being allotted sooner for persons like Mr. Price, if this bill is enacted will not only be the humane thing to do but, it will also give an opportunity to many in his same situation the chance to prove their rehabilitation, their brain growth and development.

Thank you again for your time concerning my matter.

Sincerely,

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