Juvenile Crime Essay, Research Paper

Should Juveniles be Tried as Adults?

Violent crimes are committed in the United States

everyday. Almost one-half of them are committed by

teenagers ages 13 through 17 (”End of Line” 484). After the

crimes have been committed and the lives of these children

have been radically changed, society often demands that

those who commit violent crimes be tried as adults, rather

than as adolescents.

Juveniles should be given light sentences and a second

chance to return to the streets. Trying these teens as

adults unjust and unfair, there other alternatives that our

society can turn to, to help make our communities better

places to live. We need to realize that children are our

future, and we throwing their future away. We also need to

ask ourselves if we should possibly be punishing these kids

for not having stability in our homes, which is not their

fault.

Growing up in America today can be a very traumatic

experience facing many pressures and trials. The youngest

generation looks up to the teenagers for guidance but what

kind of example are today’s teenagers many concerned parents

ask. There could be a much better example if the justice

system did not let them get away with so many violent

crimes. When a juvenile commits a crime he has a trial in a

juvenile court. The basic idea behind the juvenile court is

guardianship, the states acting for the welfare of children.

“The jurisdiction and procedure of the juvenile court have

been primarily chancery or equity rather than criminal

(Miller 38).”

In a May 1987 issue of Business Week followed up on a

case when a 16 year old boy brutally raped and murdered a

26 year old woman in front of her two children ages four and

six. After the woman was dead the young man proceeded to

shoot the children. The children were not killed, but now

live with the horrifying memory of their mothers brutal

death. To make this story even more heart-crushing this

young man was merely slapped on the hand with a sentence of

two years in physciatric juvenile detention facility. If

tried as an adult, this young man would have received 20 to

35 years maximum sentence in a state penitentiary without

bail. Maybe this sixteen year old should have gotten more

than two years but he came out a man from the detention

facility (Wadsworth 11). He matured and learned to be

himself, not wht other people wanted him to be.

Rehabilitation programs are one alternative that has

proven successful and helpful (Age 61). An example of a

success story was Trina Leas of Peoria, Illinois. Trina was

only 13 years old when she brutally shot and killed her

classmate in the middle of class. Trina subsequently

attended a local camp for troubled youth called “Peoria’s

Camp Neighborhood” and was totally changed. Now Trina lives

a life free of crime and works in Peoria to help counsel

youth (Age 64). Another success story from Wichita, Kansas

concerns an eleven-year-old boy named Iman Reed. Young Iman

had been hanging out on the streets and was a prime target

for a revenge shooting. Out of fear for her son’s life,

Iman’s mother enrolled him in the “Big Brother Program.”

This program paired Iman with a big brother, and now five

years later, he has all A’s and B’s and has his sights set

on a law degree. Iman is no longer involved with any street

activities and encourages others to stay away. When asked

about the program, Iman said, “If it was not for the

program, I would still be in one of those gangs, or dead

(Sheldon).”

Juveniles should not be tried as adults because serving

time in jail will more likely lead to greater conflicts. An

example of this was “Sneakers,” a Milwaukee gang member.

Sneakers was seventeen years old and had been tried as an

adult on two counts of larceny; each jail sentence was nine

months in a security prison. Each time Sneakers got out of

jail he returned to the streets, and was still involved in

crime and gangs (Roberta). All that time in jail only

helped him to master more criminal techniques. Sneakers had

fourteen years before he was considered for parole. If

Sneakers had been tried as a juvenile he would have received

a light sentence and counseling of some kind to help him get

off the streets.

In other cases there are Prevention Programs which

indicate that recreation and training programs can

contribute directly to reduce the number juvenile arrests.

For example, the Dallas police recorded a twenty-six percent

drop in juvenile arrests after prevention programs (Cunliffe

B3). These programs are not punishment, but prevention that

were implemented to put a dent in crime. Kids experience

activities that reward them emotionally and instill hope in

their future.

All over the world America stands for a place of freedom, a

place of peace. No longer will America stand for this if we

do not lay down stricter guidelines for todays juvenile

offenders. America needs to be firm with these young

offenders, not because of their age but for the extent of

the crime committed. The future must also be protected, not

put in jail. The problem can no longer be ignored; it must

be helped. Rehabilitation has proven to be successful, and

until these crimes can be completely prevented,

rehabilitation is a successful solution rather than locking

kids away. Now more than ever juveniles should remain

juveniles in the eyes of the law; they should be helped and

encouraged, not destroyed.