

TAKE ACTION

Genarlow Wilson has been released! Thanks to the Georgia Supreme Court, B.J. Berstein, Senator Emanuel Jones, Representative Alisha Thomas Morgan, Senator Vincent Fort, Dr. Joseph E. Lowery and Helen Butler of Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda, Francis Johnson of the NAACP the SCLC, Concerned Black Clergy, National Action Network and everyone who participated in this fight. We have good reason to celebrate – Justice has been administered. We wish Genarlow and his family God's grace and mercy.

But too many young people are receiving sentences that are disproportionate to the behavior they are accused of. Genarlow admits that he exercised poor judgment. That is not the question. The question is whether the time fits the crime. We have more work to do. We must make changes to the law to give other young people a chance to lead productive lives, despite youthful mistakes. No person should receive cruel or unusual punishment. If you would like to see other youngsters avoid long periods of incarceration for behavior similar to Genarlow's, contact your Georgia state Senator or Representative to urge passage of Senate Bill 37, offered by Sen. Emanuel Jones.

Furthermore, legislators are not qualified by education or experience to sit in the place of judges, juries and prosecutors to determine mandatory minimum punishment for any violation of the law. Those with access to the facts and all the relevant law, including the extenuating or ameliorating circumstances, should determine how an individual should be punished. Those determinations should not be made by legislators sitting under the Gold Dome speculating about hypothetical cases. Contact your state representative to oppose all new mandatory minimum sentences.

To find and contact your legislator, visit <http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/FindLegislator.htm>

Finally, we need better oversight of prosecutors. Sitting District Attorneys should be restricted from lobbying the legislature. The Supreme Court should conduct a study of a representative sample of indictments and grand jury proceedings to determine whether prosecutors are routinely over-charging defendants by prosecuting multiple offenses for the same set of facts. The State Bar of Georgia should enforce existing rules against conflicts of interest rules for prosecutors in the same way that it does members of the private bar. Contact the Supreme Court of Georgia to request oversight of prosecutors.

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