

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Media Advisory

Safe & Just
Michigan

Former juvenile lifers to share their stories, talk about their return home at event at Wayne State University on Oct. 1

DETROIT — Area residents will have an opportunity to hear former juvenile lifers share their stories of redemption and coming home and then ask them questions about their experiences at an upcoming event at Wayne State University. “**Life Beyond Life: Stories of Hope and Healing**” will be held at **7 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 1 at the Bernath Auditorium, located inside Wayne State University’s Adamany Undergraduate Library.** The moderator and panelists will also be available for media interviews following the event. This is a free event, but people interested in attending are asked to register at bit.ly/lblevents. This event is sponsored by Safe & Just Michigan, the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth and the Center for Behavioral Health and Justice at the Wayne State University School of Social Work.

The U.S. Supreme Court ended juvenile life without parole as a mandatory sentence through a series of rulings between 2012 and 2016, but it remains on the books in Michigan as an option judges can use at their discretion. Bills now before the Michigan Legislature (House Bills 4160-4164 and Senate Bills 119-123) would remove juvenile life without parole sentencing from Michigan as an option entirely. Those bills are currently awaiting hearings in committees. Currently, the U.S. is the only country in the world that sentences children to die in prison, and even in the U.S., Michigan is among a minority of states still using this sentence.

Since Michigan began releasing former juvenile lifers to come home, they have demonstrated a recidivism rate dramatically lower than that of the overall population. The state’s current recidivism rate is hovering near a record low, at 22.1 percent. However, the recidivism rate of former juvenile lifers is even lower — less than 5 percent.

This event will combine excerpts from videos from our storytelling project, located at www.safeandjustmi.org/life-beyond-life/, followed by a panel discussion. Panelists will include

former juvenile lifers **Machelle Pearson, Lorenzo Harrell** and **Jose Burgos** with SJM Community Engagement Specialist **Ronnie Waters** acting as moderator.

- WHO:** **Machelle Pearson, Lorenzo Harrell, and Jose Burgos:** former juvenile lifers
Ronnie Waters: moderator, former juvenile lifer and Safe & Just Michigan community engagement specialist
- WHAT:** Life Beyond Life: Stories of Hope & Healing
- WHERE:** Bernath Auditorium
Adamany Undergraduate Library
Wayne State University
Detroit
- WHEN:** Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024 at 7 p.m. — free tickets available at bit.ly/lblevents
- NOTE:** The moderator and panelists are available for media interviews following the event.

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Safe & Just Michigan (www.safeandjustmi.org) works to advance policies that end Michigan's over-use of incarceration and promote community safety and healing. We partner with Michigan organizations and leaders from across the political spectrum, including business and community leaders, faith communities, crime survivor organizations, formerly incarcerated individuals, prisoners and their families, as well as Michigan taxpayers statewide.