

ADVOCATING

CfJJ's priority this year was combating racial disparities in the juvenile justice system, where youth of color are vastly over-represented without any evidence that they commit more crimes, or more serious crimes, than white youth.

These racial disparities are commonly referred to as Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC). Because we can't obtain data on exactly where and at what rates the disparities are occurring in the system, our capacity to understand — let alone reduce — DMC in Massachusetts is severely restricted. That's why CfJJ's major initiative this year was the **Just Facts campaign**, a multi-pronged effort to obtain basic statistical data, including race and ethnicity information, at every key decision point in our system from arrest to re-entry. With our many partners, including the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Task Force on Racial Disparities, we helped draft and advocate for legislation (Senate Bill 940) that would require agencies involved in juvenile justice to collect comprehensive statistical data and make it public. Many thanks to Youth Policy Initiative Funders Collaborative, whose capacity-building grant has energized and bolstered this work!

Another aspect of our work on racial disparities is the **Springfield Research Project**. In Springfield, where almost all the children in public schools are children of color, the "school-to-prison-pipeline" is astonishingly direct: **40%** of the juvenile arrests are school-based. This past summer, CfJJ and the National ACLU launched a research project to try to understand what's going on in Springfield schools that sweeps so many children of color into the juvenile justice system.

CfJJ also pursued solutions to the problems of racial disparities through its active participation in two state-wide collaborations of stakeholders: the DMC subcommittee of the Governor's **Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee** and the DMC subcommittee of the **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative** led by the Department of Youth Services.

"Rather than serving in the U.S. Senate for almost 20 years.... I could have served a ... sentence in prison for some of the stupid, reckless things I did as a teenager. I am grateful to have gotten a second chance -- and I believe our society should make a sustained investment in offering second chances to our youth."

Alan K. Simpson, former U.S. Senator from Wyoming (1977 – 1996) and former juvenile offender, Washington Post Op Ed, 10.23.09

Other issues that we worked on this year include **the impact of the state budget crisis on the Department of Youth Services**, the need to re-examine **mandatory life without parole sentencing**, the serious **consequences of having a juvenile record**, and the unsustainable and inappropriately designed system of **Alternative Lock Up Programs** that hold children before arraignment when Juvenile Court is not in session. We also began, along with five other organizations in the **Cultivating Youth Voices Initiative** and support from Third Sector New England and the John W. Alden Trust, to explore ways to enhance the voice of youth in our program development, decision-making and advocacy.

EDUCATING AND CONNECTING

We organized and participated in a host of conferences and events highlighting the importance of a fair and effective juvenile justice system. Connecting with other advocates here and across the nation, we participated in the annual forum of the **National Juvenile Justice Network** in Washington, D.C. in June; hosted a **Juvenile Justice Forum** featuring newly-appointed Chief Justice of the Juvenile Court Michael Edgerton at the Boston Bar Association in July; participated in and led a workshop at the 2009 national conference of the federal **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention** in Austin, Texas in October; co-sponsored the **Community Gems Partnership conference *Verdict Delayed: Youth and Justice*** at Northeastern University in November; and hosted our annual **Leadership Celebration** – honoring Martha Grace, recently-retired Chief Justice of the Juvenile Court, featuring Bob Schwartz of the Juvenile Law Center in Philadelphia, and marking CfJJ's 15th anniversary! – at the BBA in December.

THE VOICE FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

An important component of CfJJ's mission is to respond to and to help shape **media coverage** of a wide range of juvenile justice issues. This year, those issues included crime rates, girls in the juvenile system, juvenile life without parole, and detention reform. We also work to keep all our members and friends up to date on juvenile justice news, research and events, and we are pleased to announce that we have just completed a major upgrade of CfJJ's **website and its email communications**.

In working to raise the profile of juvenile justice issues in the Commonwealth, CfJJ's Executive Director, **Lael Chester, was selected as a "Woman of Justice"** by the Women's Bar Association and Massachusetts Lawyers' Weekly!

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010

While we will continue our work on racial disparities as we press forward with the *Just Facts* campaign, the central focus of our work in 2010 will transition to examining the issue of **raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction**. Currently in Massachusetts, *all* 17-year-olds charged with a crime are automatically tried and sentenced in the adult criminal justice system – a policy that is in violation of international standards, contrary to everything we know about adolescent development, and out of step with the vast majority of other states. We will examine the impact of treating 17-year olds in the adult system – and the potential consequences of shifting that population into the juvenile system.

In partnership with the Trinity Boston Foundation, we are planning a **conference on Juvenile Re-entry for February 11, 2010**. Our **2010 Juvenile Justice Leadership Celebration** is scheduled for Thursday, **December 2, 2010**, with Laurence Steinberg as the keynote speaker. Mark your calendars – and watch your email for more news and events!

It's CfJJ's members and donors, event sponsors and attendees, and foundation supporters – especially the Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation and the Public Welfare Foundation – who make this all possible. Thank you so much!