

Pre-1800

Until the 19th century children accused of crimes in the U.S. were, if found guilty, placed into the adult jails then in existence.

1825 – The United States established its first youth detention facility. The New York House of Refuge established a “colored” section in 1834 (Bell & Ridolfi, 2008).

1827 – The new Illinois criminal code passed and raised the age of criminal responsibility to 10 from 7 years old (Hoerr-McNamee, 1999).

1850 – The House of Refuge for Colored Children was opened in Philadelphia, PA. This was the only time in the 19th century that a northern state opened such an institution specifically for blacks. The program of Houses of Refuge was to serve to “retrain, to educate, to impart morality, and to incarcerate potentially harmful deviants (Frey, p.11).

1850 – Approximately 50 percent of youth under 16 in the Providence, RI jail were black, 60 percent of the youth at the Maryland penitentiary in Baltimore were black, and all youth in the Washington D.C. penitentiary were black – despite the regions' largely white populations. Black children were also incarcerated younger than white children, had fewer opportunities for advancement upon discharge and suffered a disproportionately higher death rate (Bell & Ridolfi, 2008).

1855 -- For nineteen-year-old Celia, a slave on a Missouri farm, five years of being repeatedly raped by her middle-aged owner was enough. On the night of June 23, 1855, she would later tell a reporter, "the Devil got into me" and Celia fatally clubbed her master as he approached her in her cabin. The murder trial of the slave Celia, coming at a time when the controversy over the issue of slavery reached new heights, raised fundamental questions about the rights of slaves to fight back against the worst of slavery's abuses.

“Seventy-year old Robert Newsome bought 14-year old Celia and forced sexual relations on her immediately and repeatedly. One night when Newsome went to Celia’s cabin to abuse her, she struck him with a stick and killed him instantly. Celia was pregnant for the third time by Newsome and was very ill when he last approached her. At her trial, the court was concerned only with whether Celia had a right to defend herself against her master’s assault. The trial judge made it clear that Celia did not have that right. To the court, Celia had no sexual rights over her own body because she was Newsome’s property and she ought to have submitted to Newsome’s demands. Celia was guilty of murder and hanged 4 days before Christmas in 1855.”

1873

The first prison completely devoted to women, the Indiana Reformatory Institution for Women and Girls, opens.

1879 – The Industrial School for Girls is established in Evanston, IL based on a law authorizing the placement of girls in such schools who were found begging on the streets, consorting with thieves, loitering in a “house of ill fame” or were living in poor houses (Hoerr-McNamee, 1999).

1890 – A Census analysis by W.E.B. DuBois found that more than 18 percent of all Black prisoners were juveniles.

1899 – The first Juvenile Court is established in Chicago by members of Hull House (including Lucy Flowers and Jane Addams). This codifies the idea that children were a special category of people, neither property nor adults, but individuals in need of protection.

1913 -- In the course of an investigation recently made by the Juvenile Protective Association of Chicago upon the conditions of boys in the County jail, the Association was much startled by the disproportionate number of colored boys and young men; for although the colored people of Chicago approximate 1/40 of the entire population, 1/8 of the boys and young men and nearly 1/3 of girls and young women who had been confined in the jail during the year were negroes." – *The Colored People of Chicago, 1913*

1923 – Chicago Juvenile Detention Home opens. Police were more likely to send Black children to detention. By 1930, African Americans were 6.9% of the population in Chicago but 21.3% of boys seen in juvenile court (Wolcott, 2005).

1924 -- Eleanora Harris Fagan (Billie Holiday) was 9 years old when she first came into conflict with the law. She was brought before the juvenile court for being truant and for “being without proper care and guardianship.” She was committed for a year at the House of Good Shepherd for Colored Girls, a Catholic reform school. She was released on parole in October 1925.

1929 -- In May, Billie Holiday is arrested along with her mother and several other women during a night raid of a brothel in Harlem run by a woman named Florence Williams. She is tried and found guilty of vagrancy by a judge named Jean Hortense Norris (who was well-known for giving very harsh sentences to young offenders). She is 14 years old and sent to Welfare Island (now called Roosevelt Island) first and then to a workhouse.

1933 -- In 1933, more than 10,000 Black boys and 1,800 Black girls were arrested and had cases disposed in 67 U.S. courts and federal authorities.

1934 – Ella Fitzgerald was incarcerated at the New York State Training School for Girls at Hudson, N.Y. In 1936, State investigators reported that black girls, then 88 of 460 residents, were segregated in the two most crowded and dilapidated of the reformatory's 17 "cottages," and were routinely beaten by male staff. Like Miss Fitzgerald, most of the 12- to 16-year-old girls sent to the reform school by the family courts were guilty of nothing more serious than truancy or running away.

1935 – In February, Susie Lattimore, who was 15 years old, went to a local tavern, had a few drinks and stabbed another patron who later died. She was transferred to adult court and sentenced to 25 years in prison for first degree murder. As a result of her case, the State's Attorney gained the power to prosecute any child over the age of 10 and sentence them to an adult correctional facility.

1954

Prisoners at the state women's correctional facility in Raleigh, NC riot for several hours after the death of 18 year old Eleanor Rush. Rush was placed in solitary for 6 days. On the seventh day, Rush was not fed for over 16 hours. After 16 hours, she began yelling that she was hungry and wanted food. In response, the guards bound and gagged her, dislocating her neck in the process. Half an hour later, Rush was dead.

1967

In the Gault decision, the U.S. supreme court required that most due process rights afforded to adults also be granted for juveniles. In other words, the court found that juveniles are entitled to due process under the law. Gerald Gault had been denied the right to an attorney when he was detained for making “lewd phone calls.” He had not been formally notified of the charges against him, he had not been informed of his right against self-incrimination and had no opportunity to confront his accusers. Gault signaled the end of the traditional Juvenile Court.

1989

In *Stanford v Kentucky* and *Wilkinson v Missouri*, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the death penalty for 16- and 17- year old juveniles.

1994 – Gun Free Schools Act was enacted. The GFSA states that each State receiving Federal funds under ESEA must have in effect, by October 20, 1995, a State law requiring local educational agencies to expel from school for a period of not less than one year a student who is determined to have brought a weapon to school. This marked the introduction of “zero tolerance” policies into school environments. Many states went above and beyond the federal mandate, passing laws that required expulsion or suspension for the possession of all weapons, drugs and other serious violations on or around school grounds.

1995

At the age of 17 years, **Sarah Kruzan** was convicted of the first degree murder of her alleged pimp, George Gilbert Howard. She was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole.

2005

The U.S. Supreme court abolished the death penalty/capital punishment for all juveniles. In a 5-4 ruling the court declared that it was unconstitutional to sentence anyone to death for a crime he or she committed while younger than 18.

2010

Aiyana Mo'Nay Stanley-Jones (July 20, 2002 – May 16, 2010), was a seven-year-old African-American girl from Detroit, Michigan who was shot and killed during a raid conducted by the [Detroit Police Department's Special Response Team](#) on May 16, 2010.

Officer Joseph Weekley was charged in connection with Jones' death. In October 2011, Weekley was charged with involuntary manslaughter and reckless endangerment with a gun. Weekley's first trial ended in a mistrial in June 2013.

Weekley's retrial began in September 2014. On October 3, the judge dismissed the involuntary manslaughter charge against Weekley, leaving him on trial for only one charge: recklessly discharging a firearm. On October 10, the second trial ended in another mistrial. On January 28, 2015, a prosecutor cleared Weekley of the last remaining charge against him, ensuring there would not be a third trial.

2010

In May, the U.S. Supreme court ruled 5 to 4 that denying juveniles who have not committed homicide a chance to ever rejoin society is counter to national and "global" consensus and violates the Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. In other words, the court decided that juveniles may not be sentenced to life in prison without parole for any crime short of homicide. At least 99 people in IL are serving LWOP sentences for crimes they were convicted of committing as children. JLWOP means children are sentenced to die in prison; these individuals will never be considered for release.

2016

Bresha Meadows of Ohio was just 14 years old when she was incarcerated and faced a charge of aggravated murder for defending herself and family against the unrelenting terror and abuse of her father. She remains in jail.