

November 24, 2015

OFFICE OF DISABILITY,
ADJUDICATION AND REVIEW

Rodger Heaton
3328 W. Willowkholis Dr.
Peoria, IL, 61614

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PEORIA, IL

Dear Rodger Heaton,

I am a student at Lewis University in Romeoville, IL. This semester, I have been taking a course called Faith Behind Bars. During this course, I have learned a lot about restorative justice and think that it could benefit Illinois. Restorative justice gives the offender the chance to take responsibility for their actions and allows the victims to be involved in the process. I believe that the practices of restoring justice are beneficial to those who want to turn their lives around. I am a firm believer in second chances and believe that everyone deserves one.

Kids that get life in prison at the age of 15 do not fully understand the severity of that kind of sentence. I once heard that if a 15 year old and 45 year old both have to serve a life sentence, the 15 year old is going to spend more years behind bars. If a 15 year old is told they are bad, they will think like that for the rest of their lives while they stare at a prison wall. If kids are remorseful for their actions and think that they can turn their lives around, why not let them try? In light of the 2012 federal legislation eliminating life sentences for those who commit crimes as juveniles, I hope that you will encourage states attorneys to reconsider the life sentences given to those who committed capital crimes as juveniles in the state of Illinois.

Restorative justice can help the prison population decline and give offenders the treatment or services they need in order to turn their lives around. Giving offenders the supports necessary to start over plays a major role reducing recidivism. These offenders need to know that someone cares about them and believes they can make positive changes in their lives. As a victim, it will help the healing process and give them a chance to forgive the offender. I encourage you to take a minute and think about all the times you were given a second chance and how you got to where you are today. You never know what these people can do with a simple thing like restorative justice.



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