

# Life sentence, cruel and unusual punishment?

Law



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Teenagers are always committing petty crimes, and some are more severe than others. Most of the time when juveniles are charged for crimes, they are sent to Juvenile Hall. But what if the crime requires more punishment than that? Some teenagers are committing crimes so severe that they're being tried as adults and serving life in prison without parole. The Supreme Court is now considering whether this sentence constitutes 'cruel and unusual' punishment. Teenagers are always doing something illegal because maybe they think it's cool or they're not thinking properly or whatever it'll be.

But no matter how extensive the crime, teens shouldn't be imprisoned their whole lives because of one stupid decision or mistake they made at 15 years old. Hopefully some people grow up and out of their old ways and they regret what they had done. But, unfortunately, that's not enough. Joe Sullivan. 13 years old. Convicted in 1989 for sexually assaulting a 72-year-old woman. Now at 34, Joe is asking the Supreme Court to decide whether his sentence violates the Constitution's Eighth Amendment ban on "cruel and unusual punishment".

Joe Sullivan is located in Florida - the state holding the highest number of non-homicidal juvenile lifers: 77. Joe's crime is cruel and unusual but others could and are way worse. According to the reports from the Equal Justice Initiatives, only 8 people in the world, all in the United States, are serving crimes they committed at 13. Prompted by a quick rise in juvenile crimes in the 1990s, Florida and other states have taken a get-tough approach. Which made the punishment much more severe for their crimes. Rebecca Falcon. 5 years old. Convicted on November 19th, 1997 for shooting and killing a cab

driver. That night Rebecca was upset over an ex-boyfriend and because of that, she drank a large amount of whiskey.

Later on, she and an 18-year-old friend hopped in a cab and within minutes the driver was dead. To this day, the shooter wasn't identified, however the gun belonged to her friend. Both had put the blame on each other. Now Rebecca is 27 and highly regrets her decisions from night. Some people do mature over time and not everyone deserves to be sentenced for life for a crime they committed as teenagers. 2, 500 prisoners in the United States are serving life imprisonment for crimes they did as juveniles. 109 people were sentenced for life for crimes that didn't involve a homicide. Besides Sullivan's case, there have been only one other case involving teenagers locked away for rape. But the question is, is it right? Obviously putting them in Juvenile Hall will do nothing seeing how they committed the crime a year or two before they would get out if they were put there.

But at the same time, life in prison might not be the best thing either. Putting a 13-year-old in jail and telling them they'll be there for the rest of their lives is somewhat overwhelming. Young teens are more susceptible to peer pressure and easily run off the straight and narrow by the environment around them. Jail is suppose to serve two purposes: Punishment and rehabilitation. However, if teens are being sent to life without parole, they're only getting the punishment. Not everyone should be giving parole but no one should be denied a chance at another life.