

***This is a shortened version of the victim's impact statement that I made to the court almost exactly two years ago and also shared here last year. I was the victim in a carjacking committed by two boys, one of which was caught and charged as an adult – he was 16 and spent his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday awaiting his transfer hearing in an adult jail, where he sat for 6 months.***

The first Sunday night after my 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, I drove home from my boyfriend's house because I had work early the next morning and was happy to find a parking space right around the corner from my house. Two guys walked past my car as I got out. I closed the door and pressed the lock button on my keys.

That moment, I was in a chokehold. [NAME] and his friend had turned around, run toward me, and [NAME] was holding me from behind. He turned me around to face the second guy who knocked everything I was holding from my hands. All I could think was, "I can't believe this is happening to me."

[NAME] dropped me onto the sidewalk and tore my purse from my body. I heard my car start, saw the lights out of the corner of my eye, heard the car doors slam shut, and listened to the tires screech as [NAME] and his friend peeled back the way I had just come. I was in the fetal position on the ground.

Up until recently, I didn't walk anywhere alone at any time of day and walked with my fists clenched and heart rate elevated. This all happened to me when I began my master's degree in public health at Johns Hopkins – I have since graduated. He took not only my car that night, but also my sense of safety and confidence.

[NAME] was 16. [NAME] has parents, he has siblings and cousins, he has grandparents, friends, and teachers, who care that he was charged and committed a crime. They are affected by the now absence of their son, brother, cousin, grandson. Having read the medical and psychological profile performed on [NAME], it is striking that he felt the same helplessness and fear that I do now – he is also a victim. [NAME] has experienced terrible things in his short life and suffers because of them in some of the same physical and emotional ways as me now. I do not mean to give him a pass or an excuse for his

behavior, but I can understand the bleakness he feels about life and what he perceives his future looks like. Life must look grim to **[NAME]**.

In his evaluation, **[NAME]** talks about goals and dreams. He said he hopes to attend college and is interested in becoming involved with performing arts. It is only through intensive interventions that his goals can be realized, and to the best of my knowledge, such interventions are only available in the adult justice system.

It was my position that this case be transferred to the juvenile court system, where he could have the opportunity to partake in rehabilitative services that will help him to live a fruitful and criminal free life. I truly want the best for **[NAME]**, who has suffered at the hands of an inner-city that never had his best interests at heart.

I had discussions with the juvenile prosecutor and we devised what I saw as a reasonable plan for **[NAME]** in the custody of the juvenile court system, including removal from society for a period of time, going back to school at a different high school in the county, and completing programs that are designed to help him develop. **[NAME]** and his accomplice will not stop me from pursuing my life's dream and I truly hope that **[NAME]** can and will live out his dreams.

I share this story today to give you some insight about how a victim can react to crime and to try and help you see **[NAME]** as a victim, too, who constantly felt on edge and unsafe, both of which are normal biological responses, and who responded to those feelings by finding validation with the wrong crowd and making a split second decision at the age of 16.

Passing this legislation will put more kids like **[NAME]** in adult prison before transfer. **[NAME]** sat alone with dangerous adult criminals for 6 months with an adult charge that was visible to the public and separated from his mother, who from what I could tell was his only advocate – only to be transferred back to the juvenile jurisdiction, which cost time, money, and undue burden on the system.