

Supreme Court hears opening arguments for 14-year-olds jailed for murder

Pam Cohen | Mar. 21, 2012 NCR Today

Opening arguments in two Supreme Court cases dealing with giving 14-year-olds a life sentence were heard Tuesday in [Miller vs. Alabama](#) [1] and [Jackson vs. Hobbs](#) [2].

The court will decide if life sentences for those who were 14 years old when they committed capital murder "constitutes cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the Eighth Amendment," according to the Supreme Court website.

On Monday, [NCR featured an op-ed by Fr. Gregory J. Boyle](#) [3], executive director and founder of [Homeboy Industries](#) [4], the largest gang-intervention and re-entry program in the country. He argues that 14-year-olds are "irresponsible, immature, impulsive and vulnerable in ways adults simply are not" (and who wasn't, at 14?) and that they should be given the chance to make something of their lives outside of prison.

Boyle tells the story of Louis Perez, whom he met when Perez was 14 in probation camp, but who now runs things for Boyle at Homeboy Industries. The comments Boyle received on the article are insightful and thought-provoking.

For those interested in the court cases, check out the transcripts of Tuesday's opening statements for [Miller vs. Alabama](#) [5] and [Jackson vs. Hobbs](#) [6].

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Links:

[1] <http://www.scotusblog.com/miller-v-alabama/>

[2] <http://www.scotusblog.com/jackson-v-hobbs/>

[3] <http://ncronline.org/node/29404>

[4] <http://homeboy-industries.org/>

[5] http://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/10-9646.pdf

[6] http://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/10-9647.pdf