In fall 2016, the Human Rights Watch Student Task Force (STF) called for fair sentencing for youth in California by successfully campaigning for the Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act of 2016 (Prop 57), which changes the way juveniles are sent into adult courts, provides incentives for participation in rehabilitation and education programs and creates a special parole process for non-violent offenders. Javier Stauring (above), juvenile justice advocate and executive director of Healing Dialogue and Action, educated STF leaders for the fall campaign at their September workshop.

Campaign Highlights:
- Contacted more than 3,000 people individually or in group presentations for face-to-face Prop 57 advocacy. An additional 4,000 people were reached out to via STF Weekly Updates, STF website blogs, Facebook posts and Twitter Tweets and re-Tweets.
- At fall and year-end workshops, met with juvenile justice advocate Javier Stauring (above photo), formerly incarcerated youths Kent Mendoza and Sara Kruzan, and Maggie and Itzel Bonilla, family members of a murder victim, to better understand the cost of sending juveniles into the adult system.
- Hosted five guest speaker events with formerly incarcerated advocates Herminia Galvez and Manuel Barrios at four STF high schools and Mount Saint Mary’s University to personalize the importance of Prop 57.
- Attended Santa Clarita Valley City Council meeting to ask the City Council to support Prop 57.
- Held Prop 57 community voter education events in Santa Clarita Valley and at Santa Monica College.

Sara Kruzan, human rights defender and formerly incarcerated youth, met with STFers to share her heart-rending story of being sex trafficked at age 13 and later sentenced to juvenile life without parole (JLWOP) at age 16 for killing her pimp. An earlier generation of STFers advocated for Governor Schwarzenegger to grant Sara clemency. In 2011 the Governor commuted her sentence and Sara was ultimately paroled in 2013 from Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla after serving 19 years. This year’s STF leaders were honored to meet with Sara at the spring workshop when she reminded them why their work is so critical: “When you are incarcerated you are made to feel that you don’t have a place. You begin to question your purpose and value; do you even matter? It is individuals, like you guys, who really care, that make the difference. You hand us our lifeline…”
Responding to the rhetoric of the presidential campaign and November elections, members of the Human Rights Watch Student Task Force (STF) expressed concern for the human rights of friends and family. Many of the policies and pledges made by the Trump Administration pose profound threats to the rights of people both within the US and abroad. In January, STF launched the “Know Your Rights, Protect Our Rights” campaign to educate their campus communities, focusing on LGBT, immigrant and women’s rights. On March 3 and 10, STF chapters presented “Unity Day” events to demonstrate their solidarity. STFers organized die-ins, all-school assembly presentations, art exhibits, classroom presentations and human chains calling on everyone to stand up for human rights.

STF leaders also met with Congressman Ted Lieu (33rd District) to share their “Know Your Rights, Protect Our Rights” Campaign. They expressed concern for how social divisions across the country are affecting vulnerable populations and thanked him for being an outspoken supporter of human rights at home and abroad. Students presented Congressman Lieu with a collage from Unity Day.
**Breanna Cook**
Intern ‘12–’13
UC Los Angeles ‘13
Working as the Collegiate Program Director for Transforming Youth Recovery in Reno, NV, I provide ongoing consultation and support to universities establishing programs for students recovering from addiction, and act as a national advocate for collegiate recovery programs. My STF internship was my first opportunity to engage with social justice work and undoubtedly helped me in my path to the career I have today.

**Gisselle Ramos**
Carson HS ‘16
UC Los Angeles ‘20
My first year of college has been full of self discovery and personal growth. There have definitely been times where I miss high school, especially STF, which showed me how to stop feeling helpless and instead help make a change. At UCLA, I joined a theatre organization called Night of Cultura, where we use theatre to inform UCLA students about issues occurring in Latin communities.

**Ijeoma Oti**
Intern ‘16
USC ‘18
While interning for Representative Karen Bass, I attended the inauguration, which was a moving experience. The relatively peaceful transfer of power from one administration to the next is something many countries cannot achieve. I am grateful for the institutions of democracy the U.S. upholds. I also attended the Women’s March in DC with a majority of the students in my program the day after the inauguration.

**Ben Verheiden**
Palisades Charter HS ‘10
West LA College ‘16
CSU Northridge ‘20
As a student with disabilities, I have faced my own human rights abuses. I emerged from STF as an advocate for human rights with passion and dedication. I feel like I broke down a door for all students to succeed here. I graduated Summa Cum Laude from West LA Community College. I am majoring in Urban Planning with a focus on Public Transit at CSUN, and have published two articles in the school newspaper on Urban Planning.

**Elena Cortez-Neavel**
Intern ‘11
USC ‘13
Recently, I’ve been applying for medical school and running my business, Abilitee Adaptive Wear. I work with a pediatric surgeon to design functional, fashionable clothing for kids with medical needs. Our goal is to make patients’ lives easier and spread awareness of often-invisible illnesses.

**Katia Johnstone**
Wildwood ‘08
UC Berkeley ‘12
For the last year, I taught at an educational farm outside of San Francisco. We lived on site and taught visiting students about the environment and cultivated a curiosity for nature. Since, I decided to try out farming full time. I live and work on a small organic farm in Maine that feeds its local community and hosts workshops for people to learn more about where their food comes from.

**For More STF Alumni Updates:**
www.hrwstf.org “Our Alumni”
Jessica Skylar
Immaculate Heart ‘00
Intern ‘01
American Univ. ‘04
M.A. American Univ. ‘05
For 15 years, I have worked on market-based solutions to improve access and equality.
In 2010, I joined Revolution Foods, which is transforming our nation’s food supply, serving nearly 2 million meals a week.
I serve on the Leadership Committee of International Rescue Committee’s GenR and volunteer with the National Foundation for Entrepreneurship. I also love spending time with my husband and three kids.

Mark Fernandez
Intern ‘08
UC Los Angeles ‘08
M.S. New York Univ. ‘13
Although I gained valuable work experience and knowledge of human rights as an STF intern, the most satisfying aspect for me was working with highly-motivated young people. It was a very rewarding experience, which factored into my decision to gain international experience while working with students. Now I’m a Strategic Planning Analyst at Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), overseeing business performance and managing initiatives for the Global Markets Division for the Americas.

Joslyn Bernstein
Sierra Canyon ‘16
Barnard College ‘20
During my first year at Barnard College, I’ve been involved with Columbia University’s Amnesty International chapter and continue to work on human rights advocacy. We’ve done a lot on incarceration and the refugee crisis, and I’ve helped plan on-campus advocacy events.

Anne Stotler
Consultant ‘13
M.P.P. Harvard Univ. ‘15
Now with the labor affairs office in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor at the State Department, I’m focused on labor rights, including child labor, refugee access to labor markets, and gender-related issues, with a geographic focus on Africa and Central Asia.

Jessica Lynn
Academy of the Canyons ‘15
UC Berkeley ‘19
Over the last year, I’ve spent most of my time working as a news editor for UC Berkeley’s student newspaper, The Daily Californian. I oversee and write stories, including news about UC employees violating university sexual misconduct policies, how Trump’s immigration policies impact college students, as well as the Oakland Ghost Ship Fire and the city’s negligence that allowed it to happen. This summer, I’m interning at NBC LA as a digital news intern. I am incredibly grateful for STF and how it taught me to keep my eyes on current events and always question what people in power are doing!

Rachel Kiekhofer
Santa Monica ‘14
UC Berkeley ‘18
While studying statistics at UC Berkeley, I have spent the last year and a half living in a vegan student co-op house, where I managed waste reduction. I am also part of the Jewish student center on campus. I’ve been involved with social justice related projects, including hosting a semestery community meal for food-insecure student groups, putting on a dinner series where Hillel members discussed social issues over dinner, and interviewing candidates for a social justice fellowship position.

Carlo David
Carson ‘13
UC Berkeley ‘17
From September 2017 until May 2018, I will be a fellow with the CORO Fellows Program in San Francisco. Through CORO, I intend to find opportunities in politics, public policy and journalism. I am also freelance writing for Berkeleyside, the city’s local online newspaper. After the fellowship program, I am hoping to go to law school in fall 2018.

Audrey Abergel
Valencia ‘12
Intern ‘16
Univ. of British Columbia ‘16
STF showed me the power and enjoyment of working within a positive community. Through my position on the Executive Board for the Jewish Student Association at the University of British Colombia, I helped facilitate interfaith dialogues. I’m currently in Jerusalem learning spirituality at Neve Yerushalayim. In the fall, I will attend Loyola Marymount Law School.
This fall, I will start Georgetown University’s Foreign Service Program, but until then, I am a Program Officer for Generation Democracy. We train the next generation of young democratic actors around the globe, including members of youth parliaments, political party wings, and human rights activists. We just wrapped up a four-day Youth Leadership Academy in Bangkok, Thailand and I’m currently in Johannesburg, South Africa for another conference.

Linda Gordon
Santa Monica ‘14
Barnard College ‘18
This summer I received the Arthur Liman Yale Law School Public Interest Undergraduate Summer Fellowship, and will intern at The Impact Fund, a legal nonprofit in Berkeley, CA. Law school is in my future, and I may do a joint J.D. and Masters in Social Work. Immediately after college, I may work with Americorp or Teach for America, or work at a nonprofit or in other office settings for a few years. I definitely want to work or get some teaching experience before going back to school.

Amy Calfas
Marlborough ‘09
Intern ‘09-’11
Tufts Univ. ’13
M.S. Georgetown Univ. ‘19
This fall, I will start Georgetown University’s Foreign Service Program, but until then, I am a Program Officer for Generation Democracy. We train the next generation of young democratic actors around the globe, including members of youth parliaments, political party wings, and human rights activists. We just wrapped up a four-day Youth Leadership Academy in Bangkok, Thailand and I’m currently in Johannesburg, South Africa for another conference.

Amy Amatya
Santa Monica ‘17
Princeton Univ. ’21
Before STF, I wasn’t politically involved and didn’t know about issues beyond our borders. I’ve gravitated towards science, but the themes we focused on each year taught me to see that the issues I feel so removed from, like the right to education, have consequences that aren’t just political, but have effects on so many other areas, including science. As I graduate, I have a lot of things to take with me that I can thank my time with STF for, including feeling more like an impactful, socially aware, indomitable youth than I’ve ever felt before. Thank you!

Rebecca Nissenbaum
Academy of the Canyons ‘12
CSU Sacramento ‘16
M.S. UC Davis ‘19
I just graduated from CSU Sacramento with my degree in Child Development. I am starting my Masters at UC Davis. I am also working as a teacher, showing my students everyday how important it is to know about human rights.

Sarah Gustafson
Immaculate Heart ‘01
Yale Univ. ’05
I decided to become an accountant after a two year volunteer stint in the PeaceCorps stint in Mongolia and seeing first-hand how sound financial management can make a huge positive impact in charitable endeavors. As a CPA for Clark Nuber PS in Seattle, WA, I focus on IRS reporting for charitable organizations, as well as multistate and international tax work. In my spare time, I volunteer with EarthCorps, whose mission is to build a global community of leaders through local environmental service. I am also helping develop the next generation of environmental advocates by marching with my new family in the April 27, 2017 March for Science.

Chris Price
Intern ’08
CSU Long Beach ’09
M.A. Univ. of London ’14
Recently, I was working for the Resettlement Support Center in Nairobi, Kenya. Because of Trump administration limits to the number of refugees coming into the US, the Resettlement Support Center cut more than 500 positions, including mine. I am now moving to Baltimore, MD to work with the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, conducting an audit of affiliate refugee service centers to ensure new Americans are receiving their guaranteed benefits.

Daniel Lynn
Intern ’15-’16
CSU Northridge ’14
Georgetown Univ. ’18
After completing my first year in Georgetown’s Master of Arab Studies program, I will be studying this summer at the Qasid Arabic Institute in Amman, Jordan.