

Neelum Arya is the Director of Research and Policy for Campaign for Youth Justice. A lawyer and resident of Southeast Washington DC, was named Volunteer of the Year by the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services in 2006. Neelum Arya, was named one of the 2004 Open Society Institute Soros Justice Fellows. Ms. Arya's Soros Justice Fellows project addressed the rising incarceration rates of youth in adult facilities in California. The Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act, known as Proposition 21, was a voter initiative that passed in March 2000. Proposition 21 funnels youth into the adult criminal justice system by authorizing prosecutors to directly file charges in the adult system, as well as expanding the circumstances for which youth may be prosecuted as adults. Ms. Arya's project sought to combat the effect of these policies. Through investigation, direct legal advocacy, and mobilizing youth, their families, and community advocates, Ms. Arya's project was created to prevent the incarceration of youth in adult institutions, improve the conditions of confinement for youth currently housed in these facilities, and mobilize and influence public and policymakers opinions on juveniles tried as adults.