

IRAA/SECOND LOOK AND THE YRA *WHAT ARE THEY?*

Every young person deserves the chance to build the future they dream of.

Between the ages of 16 and 25, people are still growing, learning, and discovering who they want to be. Yet too often, our legal system treats them as if their stories are already finished. Policies like the **Incarceration Reduction Amendment Act/Second Look Act (IRAA)** and the **Youth Rehabilitation Act (YRA)** recognize that young adults (16-25) differ from the older adult population. Scientific research has shown that the brain is not fully developed until the age of 25, **and** that emerging adults are highly responsive to positive, therapeutic supports.

IRAA is a pathway for young people with extreme sentences to petition the court for resentencing after 15 years of incarceration. IRAA safely returns DC residents from prison facilities all over the country back to their communities. Over 300 people have been able to come home and pursue education, healing, and opportunity.

The **YRA** allows judges to exercise discretion in sentencing, including alternative sentencing options outside federal guidelines (such as community service, treatment programs, and sentences below standard minimums). It allows defendants who have served their sentence to seal their criminal record after successfully completing their sentence and community supervision.

IRAA recipients are:

- Employed;
- Home owners;
- Business owners;
- Parents and caregivers;
- Ideal CSOSA probation agency clients;
- Mentors working in violence prevention and youth-serving fields;
- Volunteers and leaders in neighborhood and faith-based community organizations;
- Restorative practitioners and peacemakers;
- Working with fellow returning citizens and helping others succeed.

Recent analysis indicates that D.C.'s YRA sentences have had a positive impact on public safety. For those aged 22-24, being **given a YRA sentence was significantly associated with fewer rearrests.**

Additionally, YRA recipients whose convictions were set aside had fewer rearrests and reconvictions than people with similar convictions who did receive set asides.

Thrive Under 25 (TU25) is a transformative coalition that uses advocacy and public education to end the racist, damaging, and punitive responses of DC's adult criminal legal system toward people who came in contact with the system when they were under 25.

Learn more or get involved at **freemindsbookclub.org** or contact us at

mail@freemindsbookclub.org



Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop has served 316 IRAA recipients since 2017, and currently serves an additional 187 IRAA petitioners in federal prison. Free Minds is the only organization in DC that works with both IRAA petitioners and recipients pre- and post-release, including in prisons across the country, providing intensive wraparound reentry planning and reentry support services once they are home.

Of the 316 Free Minds members home in the community who were recipients of IRAA, 97% have not been convicted of a new crime.

James' and Jordan's stories show what is possible when we choose care and investment instead of punishment, not just for individuals but for entire communities.

JORDAN

YOUTH REHABILITATION ACT RECIPIENT

Jordan, a proud DC native, was charged and incarcerated as an adult when he was only 17. He was granted the YRA, and given a lighter sentence in order to finish high school. Jordan finished high school under supervision, and started college on probation. He went on to earn a degree in Business and Entrepreneurship.

Today, Jordan leads youth justice advocacy efforts across the city, working with Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop to help incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. He is launching a podcast, "The Other Side of 16," highlighting folks incarcerated as youth and connecting their stories to meaningful change.

"One mistake I made as a teenager didn't define who I am," Jordan said. "And one mistake shouldn't define anyone. With patience, support, and opportunity, young people can transform their lives."



JAMES

INCARCERATION REDUCTION AMENDMENT ACT RECIPIENT

Free Minds member James came home in 2019 after 30 years of incarceration. Since coming home, James has worked as a credible messenger and youth mentor, doing invaluable violence prevention work to create community safety. James serves as a Free Minds Peer Supporter, providing essential social emotional support to fellow Free Minds members returning from prison. He also launched his own financial literacy program for youth to help reduce the racial wealth gap in DC. James is the Thrive Under 25 Advocacy Chair, advocating on behalf of those still incarcerated.

In his rare free time, James also escorts high school students to school each morning, motivating them to learn and ensuring they arrive safely. As James shares, "Youth need someone to be there for them. I'm so grateful I can be that someone."