

**New York Times Letter to the Editor:
Young Defendants**

Young Defendants

November 10, 2003

To the Editor:

“Lawyers for Juveniles” (editorial, Nov. 3) recognized that children are developmentally different from adults and more amenable to rehabilitation. They should never be denied competent counsel. Nor, for developmental reasons, should 16- or 17-year-olds be subject to the death penalty.

Fortunately, a national consensus is emerging. While 22 states still permit the execution of juveniles, two states recently enacted laws eliminating the death penalty for juveniles; many others are considering similar laws. Much of this activity is based on recent scientific research showing that the brain is developing into late adolescence.

This does not mean that young offenders do not know right from wrong and should not be seriously punished. But they are less culpable than adults and should not be subject to the ultimate punishment.

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Miami, Nov. 4, 2003

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