



A Better Way Foundation is a Connecticut non-profit organization that is dedicated to a sensible shift in drug policy from one of incarceration to substance abuse treatment and public health.

Nikki Brown Clean Slate Committee Member Testimony  
Judiciary Committee

Raised SB 641: An Act Concerning Repeat Violent Offenders (oppose)

Raised HB 5876 An Act Concerning Mandatory Life Sentences for Repeat Violent Offenders (oppose)

Raised HB 5915 An Act Concerning Persistent Dangerous Felony Offenders (oppose)

HB 5035 An Act Concerning Repeat Violent Offenders, Burglary and Pardons and Parole (oppose)

My name is Sister Nikki Brown, a member of the Clean Slate Committee a project of A Better Way Foundation. The position of CSC is that the rehabilitation of inmates through Education, Vocational Training and Mandatory Counseling, in addition to Fair Employment and Housing Opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals and people with felony convictions, is a **PIECE OF PUBLIC SAFETY**.

I am against all 3-Strikes bills; Raised SB 641: An Act Concerning Repeat Violent Offenders, Raised HB 5876 An Act Concerning Mandatory Life Sentences for Repeat Violent Offenders, Raised HB 5915 An Act Concerning Persistent Dangerous Felony Offenders, HB 5035 An Act Concerning Repeat Violent Offenders, Burglary and Pardons and Parole.

These bills directly effects me, my family and those in my community all of whom I hold dear to my heart. If there was a 3-strikes law I as a mentor, leader and responsible member to society, who currently have a few felony convictions on my record would be in jeopardy. These are old charges. God forbid if I were to question an officer making an arrest and that particular officer was having a bad day and arrest me for "interfering" do I then deserve a 25-year or life jail sentence?

There are many people in my community like me whom have overcome many hard times and learned and have become better people. So is it fair for us to be constantly penalized for the crimes of 2 other people? Suppose I was charged with a crime and was persuaded to plead guilty; I was told once, "you already have a record so why not". Who would benefit from me serving time, certainly not my 10-year old daughter and family who is very dependant upon me. Definitely not my community that I am a strong advocate for. Not the many people that I have mentored over the years and certainly not society.

There is a persistent offender law already. Why now implement 3-strikes? What changed now? Where you not against violence the first 2 times? There is a huge racial disparity act here in Connecticut, where African Americans and Latinos are treated as if we are less than our Caucasian counter parts. These disparities happen in education, employment, housing, judiciary system to name a few. Families are wiped out all the time in our community and no one attempts to make changes to the law, so why now?

Where our lives not worthy enough to warrant any action? Connecticut is not going to be a safer place if there is a 3-strike law. You will be tearing down families, breaking homes and most off all eliminating the African American and Latino race. People will be locked away and many residents will leave the state. It is very easy to commit a felony in Connecticut, when we have many corrupted police departments. I am certain that since this issue has aroused many people will be attempting to apply for pardons and once again there is a huge racial disparity in that area as well.

The impact 3-stikes would have on my community is huge and it must be considered. We deserve the same opportunities in life that Caucasians are afforded. I am not accusing anyone of being a racist. What I am saying is that if you are not then hear our side. Visit our communities and talk with activist, leaders and the residents. I am sure you cannot believe we like living in these conditions, but when we are put down, turned down, mistreated and miseducated because of the color of our skin it then becomes difficult to not act out.

Have you ever questioned how we get our hands on so many drugs and handguns? There seems to only be an outcry when something goes wrong in the suburbs. Well we are Connecticut too. We are taxpayers and voters. I am not saying that we do not sympathize with the Petit family, but for us to have to be continuously punished for a crime that we have not committed and now becomes painfully aware that we are under Attack by

Governor Rell with you helping attack us. If you feel differently then why not meet with the Clean Slate Committee to have a conversation? Please don't send one of your staff members. I would appreciate a response from you.

Thank you and May God Bless you.

**Sister Nikki Brown - Youth Director  
Prison Letter Outreach Director  
Salvation & Deliverance Church**

**Clean Slate Committee Member  
127 Thompson Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
203-465-2176**