

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
February 17, 2004

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH
[REDACTED]

350 FIFTH AVENUE
34th FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10118-3299

RE: Life Sentences Without the Possibility of Parole.

Dear Ms. Parker:

Let me begin by first thanking you for having an interest in LWOP, for children under the age of 18. I hope that my story may in some way be of help to you in your quest to exact change, but please know it is impossible for me to speak to the nearly 29 years of incarceration. I will do my best to respond to each of your questions as accurately and truthfully as I possibly can. I trust the information I share with you will enlighten you to some of the trials that I've faced growing from child to man in prison.

I would also like for you to understand, that I in no way want my age to be an excuse for my actions. I made a serious mistake in judgment as a child for which I have paid, with nearly 29 years of my life to date. There is no amount of contrition that could ever compensate for my senseless act of violence, while this act was done out of ignorance, and in ignorance it was wrong.

I have been fortunate enough to have grown and to have changed from the dense child of 16, my growth is not complete, as I continue to learn more and more about myself and others as I endure the trials of my incarceration. Having said that, I don't think "Life Without Parole" is the proper response to juvenile crime. When we offend the law there is a price that must be paid, but there has to be room for rehabilitation, and redemption for a child who has no true understanding of the consequences for his/her actions. A balance has be struck, and yes, justice must be served, but it must be served with compassion, not vengeance.

1. I was born October 21, 1958 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
 2. I was 16, years of age at the time of my crime.
 3. I was 16, years of age when I was imprisoned.
 4. I am a Black male.
 5. S.C.I - Mahanoy, 301 Morea Road, Frackville, PA 17932-0001.
- A. I was arrested on May 29, 1975 for Homicide, Robbery. On the night of May 28th, my co-defendant and I went to commit a robbery. I attempted to take the purse of [REDACTED], but in my

February 17, 2004

state of intoxication, I dropped the purse. When I turned around to retrieve the fallen purse, I asked my co-defendant for the knife, I wanted to frighten Mrs. [REDACTED], and her companions. When she saw the knife, she began to scream, I in turn was overtaken by panic and fear. As I attempted to pick up the fallen purse a scuffle ensued, in my state of panic I began to swing the knife recklessly, stabbing Mrs. [REDACTED], four times, three times in the arm and once in the back. The puncture wound to the back pierced her heart, resulting in her death. An act I will forever mourn and regret.

B. At the time of my crime I was living in the streets. I had spent most of my youth in foster homes, being shipped from one foster home to another. In 1972, I ran away from my foster home in South Philadelphia, and took up living in the streets. When I got in trouble my father would always come and get me from the juvenile court, or police station. I would run away from home and live with friends, sleep in hallways, old cars, etc. I was a product of ignorance, wrapped in arrogance. I did whatever, I needed to do to sustain myself as best I could. In 1973 I went to live with my Aunt in North Carolina, but my conduct was so bad I soon found myself on a bus back to Philadelphia. I dropped out of school after completing the 9th. grade which was also while I was living with my Aunt in North Carolina. After returning to Philadelphia, I got a fake draft card, and Social Security card, had a lady friend of mine state that she was my Aunt and enlisted myself in Job Corps during the fall of 1973. I was sent to Cottonwood Idaho, in November of 1973, where I began my stay until the day of Christmas the same year. I was kicked out for assault on a Corps man. I arrived in Philadelphia, on New Years eve, January 10 1974 I was arrested with my older brother and a friend, charged with purse snatching, because of my fake identification I was placed in Philadelphia's Detention Center. After going through a line I was identified by a woman for snatching her purse the day before Christmas. A feat I could not have done, being in Idaho at the time, however, the police refuse to check my contention, but when I told them I was a juvenile, and that the Draft card was under an alias, they accepted that as truth, but refused to drop the charges for the purse snatching. I was subsequently sent to George Jr. Republic, juvenile reformatory. I ran away from there and ended up back in Philadelphia, in the housing Project that I called home Richard Allen.

C. I was arrested in the apartment of a female friend named [REDACTED] to be exact. I was taken straight to the Police Administration Building, at 8th and Race in Philadelphia, where I was interrogated, and given a lie detector

February 17, 2004

test, without the advise of an attorney of Guardian. I was handcuffed to a chair and beaten, asked questions about murders I had no knowledge of, and accused of committing them. I was never afforded counsel until my arraignment, at which time I was formally held for murder.

I don't have a problem with Human Rights Watch using any or all of the information I'm providing in this missive. My attorney at the time of my arrest was James J. Phelan Jr., I don't know where or how you might reach him.

D. [It became clear to me when I was taken to the House of Correction in Philadelphia, that I was being tried as an adult. I was placed on a housing unit for juveniles that were certified as adults. I understood that I was being charged with murder, but I didn't really understand the gravity of what was happening. My trial attorney was perfunctory at best, and did what he wanted to do not what I had asked or hoped. I felt I was being tried as an adult without having been afforded the due process of the law. I had never been before a judge to have a certification hearing. I left police administration building certified as an adult, I wanted to challenge my certification, but that was never done. No I didn't understand my sentence, in fact when my trial judge sentenced me, he told my sister I would do 16-17 years, not spend my LIFE in prison. I had also been given false hope by my attorney who told me that he had gotten his clients off with 5 to 10, or 10 to 20 both of which at the time seemed a bit much, but in retrospect would have been better than what I have.] Yes, Human Right Watch can have copies of any materials that I may have, but I warn you I don't have many. All my current attorney has is my trial transcripts. All my appeals were denied, and my subsequent Post Conviction Hearing Acts, were also denied.

E. I can't surmise the past 28 years 8 months, and 17 days of my life in the following paragraphs. However, I will attempt to give some explanation of it. Prison has been a very turbulent experience, I was force to become a man at 16 without having been afford the opportunity to grow. God guided me through a very trying time in my Life and forced me to look at the child I was, in order to make me realize the man that I have become. I watched men being raped, stabbed and even murdered. So my Life has had some life altering events. I've had to endure institutional racism, as well as racism from both Guard and inmate alike. I would not be the man that I have ultimately become if it were not for the caring of former Deputy Secretary Love who I met when I was a 17 year old, lost in a life of stupidity.

February 17, 2004

I've tried to use the cause of my incarceration as a constant motivation to do the right thing and to better myself at all cost. A lady whose daughter I stopped my fellow gang members from raping once told me early on in my incarceration to let time serve me, and not just serve time. I've used that as my motto when taking advantage of the opportunities presented to me. Have I been the best inmate? Not by any stretch of the imagination, but I'm a much better person today than I was yesterday or the day before. If I could articulate all that I've done and gone through I would, that's not possible.

The foods we are given are usually very greasy, and heavy in starches. I spend more money buying and eating junk foods than I do eating the foods they prepare. We are issued three pair of pants, and shirts, which they seem to think should last us however long we have to serve. Staff is ignorant and arrogant towards you, oftentimes creating a very volatile setting. My cell is small, and congested because they force you to live with other people, even if you don't know or like them. They are reluctant to move people when they should to calm a violative situation. If both my cell mate and I have a lot of belongings there is little room to move.

I've been transferred to several different institutions, On June 21, 1976, I was sentenced to LIFE imprisonment, On June 22, 1976, I was transferred from the House of Correction, to Holmesburg, both of which are county institutions, on June 23, 1976 I was transferred to Graterford Prison, which is a state prison, where I was classified, and then sent to Camp Hill, where I stayed until May 25, 1983, at which time I was given a disciplinary transfer to S.C.I - Huntingdon, where I stayed until February 9, 1994, when I was given a requested transfer to S.C.I - Coal Township, I stayed there until May 20, 1999, when I was given a promotional transfer to S.C.I - Frackville, I stayed at Frackville until July 29, 1999 at which time I was sent here to S.C.I - Mahanoy. My transfer to Frackville was a vindictive transfer, done to punish me for standing up for what is right. At the time of this so called promotional transfer I was the President of the inmate organization, and worked in the institutions gym where I worked in the News room. We would spend the week filming various events within the institution the take it back edit it and lay down a video track and film the institutions news. My job was called video productions, and we did the institutional news, filmed concerts, and all sporting events. Frackville was an institution that offered me nothing in terms of growth, in fact they called me to the education department and told me that they didn't know why I was sent there, they had nothing to offer me. Which is why I was subsequently sent here to Mahanoy.

February 17, 2004

I have never suffered violent treatment by institutional staff, but I have been subjected to racism, because of my wife being Caucasian, and the fact that our relationship began while I was an inmate orderly at Camp Hill, which is why I was transferred from there in 1983. I have been in several fight with other inmates, mostly during my younger years in fact all in the first year of my incarceration, because of my gang affiliation, and basically geographical place of rearing. A lot of the foolishness that I engaged myself in as a youth, I separated myself from as an adult. I think the more I learned in school, and about life as a growing adult the more I moved away from the density of my youth.

I was once stabbed in the left shoulder helping a guy, that I knew when others tried to rape him. I believe I've been blessed to not have suffered mental breakdowns. My education has been constant, I got my GED in 1977, I went to Hacc and earned myself 15 credits. I later earned a diploma in Journalism from International Correspondence Schools. In 1991, I earned my journeyman's license in Building maintenance, in 2003, I earned my journeyman's license in Maintenance Plumbing. I'm also a prison Facilitator for several classes, Citizenship, Character Development, A.I.D.S, and COR. While at Hacc I was taking Small business management, I took English 101, 051, effective Speaking, and Business Law. Most of my teachers had a true interest in my learning and provided me with the tools to succeed. I really couldn't tell you how much time I spent in school, I can only say that I spent a considerable amount of time in school for my academics, and vocational learning.

I had surgery on my left knee, and several lacerations from basketball, I'm currently being treated for hypertension. Recreation is something you can also find in these places, but I think it's important to do that in moderation.

I would like to have a second chance at Life, an opportunity to illustrate to everyone that I am not the child of 16 that took the life of Mrs. [REDACTED]. I would like to begin my Life anew with my wife and be a voice for the forgotten, speaking to our youth from my experiences, and just being a positive example of change. The one thing I want you to take from my writing is that it's truthful and from the heart. What you read in these few pages is a depiction of where I've been and the man I've become.

Thank you again for taking the time to inquire of me, and for listening to my story, and having an interest in helping to end the practice of sentencing children to Life Without the Possibility of Parole.