

P R O F I L E O F

A M Y L E E B L A C K



Full Name	AMY LEE BLACK
Prisoner Number	217778
D.O.B.	June 11, 1974
Crime(s) Convicted Of	First Degree Murder
Armed Robbery	
Date of Crime	December 7, 1990
Conviction	Date May 22, 1991
Age at Time Crime was Committed	16-years-old
Age at Time Entered Prison	17-years-old

Prisons Resided Within/Dates

SCF 7/91 - 4/04; HVW 4/04 - 4/06; SCF April, 2006

Brief description of offense and prisoner's role in it

Amy was with her 19-year-old boyfriend, Jeff, when he first robbed, then killed another man, David. Amy was unaware of Jeff's intentions, and when she saw Jeff stabbing David she attempted, unsuccessfully, to stop him. Confused, and afraid of his temper, Amy obeyed Jeff's demand that she aid him in cleaning up afterward. In the days prior to their arrest, Jeff repeatedly told Amy to take the blame for David's death if they were caught, telling her that, because of her young age, she would be charged as a juvenile and allowed to go home. Still under Jeff's influence at the time of their arrest, Amy confessed to the killing of David, a killing she did not commit.

Have you been negatively affected by your experiences as a juvenile living among adult prisoners? Please explain.

Amy had difficulty adjusting to a life of confinement. During her early years, she experienced a great deal of anxiety and anger over being separated from her family. Her anger was often acted out, resulting in many misconduct citations. She also experienced a great deal of depression, for which she was referred to a Psychiatrist.

She quickly discovered that many of the older prisoners often wanted something from her, that something often being sex or money. This led her to push people away in order to protect herself. It would be many years before she would feel close to another person.

Difficulties you experienced as a juvenile living among adult prisoners

"I experienced the same rebellious attitude as I would have at home. It was difficult because there were hundreds of women who were much older than me who wanted to 'mother' me in prison—which equated to more people trying to tell me what to do. Then there were the women who tended toward predatory behavior who wanted to take advantage of my youth. And others who were only out to get some money or to use me. Each of these forces worked against me when I was younger."

Amy's youth and inexperience also worked against her with male staff. Shortly after being incarcerated, a corrections officer who was charged with her protection, abused his state-granted authority and raped her.

How have you resolved these difficulties or dealt with them?

"At first I was rebellious- -fought tooth and nail against everything I perceived as a threat. Then I chose to ignore it all: I tried to be invisible and act as though none of it was happening.

Most recently, I lean on God's strength to get me through. I pray all the time and don't give others the opportunity to get in my space. I stay busy with work, self discovery, reading and connecting with others who are of like mind."

Amy, along with other female prisoners who had been the victims of rape and other forms of sexual abuse within the confines of the Michigan Department of Corrections, filed

a lawsuit in an attempt to stop the abuse. In 2008, the Neal suit was resolved in favor of Amy and the other plaintiffs.

How have you changed since being incarcerated?

Amy discovered a need to keep herself occupied and wasn't content to simply live from one day to the next without some direction. So, she focused her efforts on education. She earned her GED in 1992 at Scott's Correctional Facility (SCF). Upon graduation, Amy enrolled in the Business Education Technology (BET) program where she was taught clerical skills, and picked up invaluable computer training. Afterward, Amy enrolled in a paralegal training program offered through Montcalm Community College (MCC), earning her paralegal certification with distinction. She continued taking MCC courses until the funding for prisoner higher education was discontinued.

Amy has also been an active participant in many prisoner organizations and has completed numerous self-help programs. She sees a therapist regularly and manages her depression with medication. She has also given her life to God and works diligently to increase her knowledge through biblical correspondence courses.

Today, Amy finds satisfaction in working as an office clerk where she can utilize her extensive skills.

Have you remained in continual contact with family or friends since becoming incarcerated?

Amy has developed and maintained a large support system of family and friends, including her parents and brother. She also received spiritual guidance through her Christian family at 80 Strong Ministries.

What would you do if given a second chance?

If released, Amy has been assured economic assistance and emotional support by a long list of friends and family who are committed to getting her established and firmly grounded in her new life. David Seeger, CEO/President of Great Lakes Credit Union of Ohio, a man who also owns his own tax consulting business, has assured Amy a full-time office position upon her release as well as meeting her housing needs.

Further, Amy also expresses a strong desire to establish a scholarship in the name of the man who died in her case as a means to keep her focus and to aid others in achieving success.

Accomplishments/Achievements

A M Y L E E B L A C K

1991 - Present

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EDUCATION

- 01) Currently enrolled in Biblical Studies program by correspondence through 80 Strong Ministries
- 02) Paralegal Certificate through Montcalm Comm College, SCF '96
- 03) G.E.D., SCF '92

COUNSELING

- 01) Monthly counseling with therapist
- 02) Inner Peace, Health and Wellness, through Community Mental Health
- 03) Domestic Violence program
- 04) Anger Management
- 05) Domestic Violence
- 06) Coping With Depression
- 07) Narcotics Anonymous
- 08) Alcoholics Anonymous
- 09) Heritage Substance Abuse program

EMPLOYMENT/WORK HISTORY

11/06 - 05/09	Special Activities Clerk, SCF
06/06 - 11/06	Law Library Clerk, SCF
11-05 - 04/06	Chaplain's Clerk, HVW
02/05 - 08/05	In-House Maintenance, HVW
09/03 - 04/04	Recreation Clerk, SCF
09/01 - 03/02	Health Care Porter, SCF
10/00 - 09/01	Prisoner Store Worker, SCF
1996 - 1998	Full-Time MCC student, SCF
1993 - 1995	Full-Time Technical student, SCF
1991 - 1992	Full-Time G.E.D. student, SCF

ACTIVITIES BY YEAR

1991 - 1992

- 01) G.E.D. Studies

1993 - 1994

- 01) Business Education Technology technical program

1995

01) Business Education Technology technical program

College, MCC

- Improved Reading & Writing
- Efficient Study
- Introduction to Social Science I
- Freshman English I

1996

College, MCC Paralegal Certification courses

- Legal Environmental Business
- Legal Research and Writing
- Introduction to Paralegal Studies
- American Criminal Law

1997

College, MCC Paralegal Certification courses

- Estates, Wills & Trusts
- Criminal Investigation
- Litigation I: Pretrial
- Domestic Law

1998

College, MCC Paralegal Certification courses

- Tax Accounting
- Litigation II: Trial & Appeals
- Administrative Law

2004

01) Featured in "Second Chances: Juveniles Serving Life Without Parole In Michigan Prisons", a publication by the Michigan ACLU.

2005

- 01) KERYX Christian Ministry (Table of Hannah)
- 02) Included in a publication by the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, entitled, "The Rest of Their Lives: Life without Parole for Child Offenders in the United States" protesting juvenile life sentences.

2006

01) Featured in "Second Chances: Shining A Light On Human Rights Violations In Michigan's Child Sentencing Guidelines", a publication of the Michigan ACLU.

2007

01) Completed MDOC Prisoner Worker Safety Training

2008

01) Co-founded J.A.I.L. (Juveniles Against Incarceration for Life"

Happy New Year!!

January 2, 2009

Dear Friends,

I guess this is the beginning of yet another year. Do we have another year in us? After the past few months of what felt like literally holding my breath, waiting to see what was going to happen with these bills, I have decided that Yes, we have another go 'round in us. Mostly because there isn't any other way. We are lucky this term to have more Dems in the senate than before. Not the majority, but more than before. I guess that has to stand for something right? And at least we know now that we can get it through the house with no problem. I know, I know, it may seem like such a huge waste of time and emotion to keep chasing after the same dream, time after time. Don't think that I have not had my own moments of self pity and yes, even points of self destruction. However, this is not the state of mind ment for us to dwell in. We won't ever be able to win this battle that we have begun, if we don't see it through to the end.

There are going to be times when it feels like we just can't tell our people just one more time that "this is it" or be able to stand to hear

the disappointment in their voice again when we have to tell them on the phone again that the legislature has failed to push our bills through their system.

As I sit here today in attempt to write these encouraging words to you, I'm not all that encouraged myself, however I know that regardless to how we FEEL, we must continue to fight this fight that we have invested all of our time and efforts into. There is no time for stopping, there is no time for feeling sorry for ourselves, there is no time for self pity, or for taking a break. I tell lifers all the time that they don't have the luxury of being tired. Being tired is for those who know they have time to rest. We don't have time like that. The only rest we have is rest in Christ.

So please, don't let become the stone that blocks the path to your road to freedom. I am here for you, and I know that all our efforts will eventually pay off. You are all appreciated and loved greatly.

May God Bless You and Your Families Abundantly.

In His Service,

Amy Lee Black.