

POPULAR
profiles a loss of
Liberty



POPULAR Constituent:

Initials - C. T.

City, State - Atmore, Alabama

I have been a political prisoner for 17 years. The State arrested me at the age of 16, I was found guilty of capital murder and sentenced to life without parole, for a crime that I was not present. I knew about the crime, after the fact, but did not participate nor order any such murders. There were 2 other defendants (that were present and committed the crime) one was given life without parole, the other sentenced to 3 concurrent life sentences.

The defendant with the lesser sentence was given a deal by the DA's office simply because he arrived first to the police station with lawyer in hand and lied. I had seen this defendant leave the police station prior to my questioning. When I was interrogated by the police for hours until early morning hours, my Mother did not know where I was and I waived my rights to have a lawyer or parent present. I realize now that when they asked me if I understood my Miranda rights, I really did not understand the consequences of my decision. I believed that once I told them what I knew, I would walk out that door as I had seen the other defendant. I never saw my home again after that night!

This defendant changed his statement 3 times prior to trial and the week of my trial told the DA that I had no culpability. (in court transcript) Yet, with this knowledge the State still proceeded to persecute me and did not call their key witness to testify.

The State also had information about another person being present at the crime and did not pursue any charges against this individual. He was interviewed and set free. Why? We do not know. This information has only come to our knowledge in the last few years. (corroborated witness) Yet, I was 15 miles away, passed out from alcohol, this fact never disputed by the State nor anyone else, and I was tried and convicted.

At the time of this occurrence, February 1992, politicians were promising a get tough on crime committed by juveniles. The State built their case in the news media portraying me as a young thug and comparing me to Charles Manson. I had no previous criminal record but I was no angel, because I was skipping school and doing things that my Mother did not approve. I was even portrayed in the news as having committed the crimes, beating these 2 boys to death, which by the way, one of them was my best friend.

My Mother was a single parent of 3 (divorced for 11 years) and could not afford to hire an attorney. My father died one week to the day after I was arrested and the news media plastered his death on the front page trying to portray his death as a suicide because he believed his son was a murderer. When the autopsy was complete and his death was proven to be of natural causes, you could barely find the small article lost in the back pages of the newspaper declaring cause of death.

My Mother believed that my innocence would prevail and we were given court appointed attorneys, with no capital trial experience. My constitutional right, 6th amendment guaranteeing effective assistance of counsel was obviously violated. According to information that we

acquired years later, everyone knew that one of the appointed lawyers had a cocaine habit, and was suffering this addiction during trial, everyone but us. It apparently was a well known fact amongst the courthouse and all lawyers in that city. (Corroborated witness)

When the hearing for transfer to adult court was held, I only met one of the criteria for transfer, (heinousness of the crime) yet I was still transferred to adult court. The victims families were demanding it and so were the DA's constituents, regardless of what was in the interest of justice.

One of the foundations of the American system of justice, guarantees us to be tried by a jury of our peers, but how many teenagers under the age of 18, are allowed to sit on a jury? So, a jury of my non-peers, found me guilty of capital murder and I was sentenced to life without parole.

The same incompetent attorneys filed my case in appeals court, but said they would not continue in Federal Court. I have not been able to get legal representation since 1995 and our time has expired for relief. My Mother has been unrelenting in an attempt to free me from this maximum security prison, where I have spent more than half of my life.

So, for the past 17 years I have been a political prisoner of the State. They knew I was not guilty and did not reveal their mistake to the jury, prosecuted me and rehearsed witness testimony to win their case against me. I have a corroborating witness to the fact that they told their primary witness what to say, and gave her a copy of the others defendant transcript (his trial was 5 months earlier) to study and memorize. They were more concerned with pleasing the public and winning their case than finding justice. So, I have paid the price with my life, to boost political careers.

I have been deprived my freedom despite all our efforts. We have pursued every avenue possible or any suggestion of help, yet have 100's of letters denying assistance. I was only a child, now a grown man; half of my life spent in an adult prison. I am only asking for what is right and just, release me from my bondage.

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