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Lisa Montgomery, a Person with Severe Trauma and Mental Illness, and Only Woman on Federal Death Row, Petitions for Clemency

Execution Scheduled for January 12, 2021

(Washington, D.C.) Lisa Montgomery, who was born with brain damage, suffered a lifetime of sexual torture, and struggles with severe mental illness and keeping in touch with reality, has submitted a petition for executive clemency to President Trump. “Our country has long recognized that mental illness is a mitigating factor and calls for a lesser punishment,” the clemency [petition](#) states.

The petition, which can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/ybawop7b>, opens:

Broken before she was born, Lisa Montgomery’s life was filled with torture, terror, failure, and betrayal. Caretakers, family members, neighbors, schoolteachers, social workers, counselors, lawyers, and judges — all could have intervened to save Lisa from the crippling trauma and profound mental illness that overtook her already damaged brain, culminating in the awful tragedy that took the life of Bobbie Jo Stinnett. Had just one person intervened, all of this could have been avoided. But they did not. And so now you are faced with the awesome responsibility of deciding whether Lisa Montgomery lives or dies. You alone have the power to temper Justice with Mercy. You alone have the power to protect her children and grandchildren from more heartache and pain. You alone have the power to join the growing chorus to end the stigmatization of mental illness. You alone have the power to send a message to the thousands of women who have been the victim of childhood rape and trafficking that their pain matters – that they matter – that their lives have value. You alone write the ending to this story – does it end with more pain? Or does it end with hope, mercy, and understanding? We pray it is the latter. (Clemency Petition at p. 1.)

Mrs. Montgomery is the only woman to face execution in America for the type of crime she committed – attacking a pregnant woman and taking the baby – because most prosecutors recognize that such crimes are the product of severe mental illness and trauma. Stanley Garnett and Harry Zimmerman, who prosecuted women for crimes similar to Mrs. Montgomery’s, wrote to President Trump:

We know from first-hand experience that these crimes are inevitably the product of serious mental illness. Women who commit such crimes also are likely to have been victimized themselves. These are important factors that make death sentences inappropriate. We therefore urge you to commute the

death sentence of Lisa Montgomery, a mentally ill and brutally traumatized woman[.] (Clemency Petition at p. 7.)

The nation's three leading mental health organizations -- the National Alliance of Mental Illness, Mental Health America, and Treatment Advocacy Center -- wrote to urge President Trump to commute Mrs. Montgomery's sentence: "We believe that Ms. Montgomery, who acted in grip of a psychotic episode, should not be subject to the death penalty due to her brain damage and severe mental illnesses, and a sentence of life imprisonment without possibility of release is an appropriate sentence for her." (Clemency Petition at p. 8.)

The petition contains 509 exhibits totaling 6,834 pages, which require additional time for careful review. In addition to the letter from former prosecutors who prosecuted similar cases and the mental health organizations, a broad, bipartisan, and diverse array of organizations wrote to President Trump supporting clemency for Mrs. Montgomery, including letters from 41 current and former prosecutors; 800 organizations and individuals working to combat violence against women; 100 organizations and individuals working to combat human trafficking; 40 child advocates whose work is devoted to protecting abused, victimized, and abandoned children; the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; United Nation experts; 81 organizations and individuals working in the field of human rights; and over 140,000 citizens who have signed a petition urging clemency.

See Letters in Support of Clemency at <https://tinyurl.com/yc44d6vu>.

Mrs. Montgomery's mother was an out-of-control, mentally unstable alcoholic, who drank during her pregnancy with Lisa and caused her to be born with brain damage. Her violence and cruelty toward Lisa and the other children knew no bounds. At one point, Lisa's mother killed the family dog by beating its head with a shovel in front of the children. (Clemency Petition at pp. 2-3.)

Lisa's stepfather started to molest her when she was around 11 years old and began raping her as a young teenager. He built a separate rape room, where he beat her head against the concrete floor and invited his friends to rape Lisa anally, orally, and vaginally. Lisa's mother also allowed men to rape Lisa in exchange for money, including gang rapes. She told Lisa she had to submit to these men to "earn her keep." (Clemency Petition at p. 4.)

Many people knew what was happening to Lisa -- including a neighbor, a cousin who was a law enforcement officer, and the judge in her mother's divorce -- and no one intervened. (Clemency Petition at pp. 4-5.) Scientific imaging demonstrates that Mrs. Montgomery's brain is damaged structurally and functionally. In addition to brain damage, she has temporal lobe epilepsy, bipolar disorder, and complex posttraumatic stress disorder. "If she had received treatment and medication, then this crime would never have happened," Mrs. Montgomery's petition states. (Clemency Petition at p. 7.)

Despite all of this, the federal government intends to execute Mrs. Montgomery on January 12, 2021. On Christmas Eve, a federal district court correctly held that the government acted illegally in setting the January 12 execution date because the government's own regulations prevent the setting of an execution date while a stay is in effect. The government appealed that decision in a race to execute Mrs. Montgomery on January 12 and a three-judge panel reversed the district court. Mrs. Montgomery's legal team appealed to the full United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia and that appeal was denied on January 5, 2021.

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The Petition for Executive Clemency on Behalf of Lisa Marie Montgomery Presented to President Donald J. Trump can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybawop7b>

*A powerful song and video about Lisa's story are available here:
<https://youtu.be/okWfnh3pDcA>*