

Outlaws



An Art Project by Robert Priseman
with contributions by Olivia Channer and an
essay by Tessa Livingstone

Outlaws

Devised by Robert Priseman

Drawings by Robert Priseman
biographies by Olivia Channer and Robert Priseman
Essay by Tessa Livingstone, PhD, FRSA

S E A B R O O K P R E S S

Contents

An Introduction by Robert Priseman	1
The Drawings With biographies by Olivia Channer and Robert Priseman	5
Mary Farmer	6
Virginia Christian	8
Ruth Snyder	10
Ada Leboeuf	12
Eva Dugan	14
Irene Schroder	16
Anna Antonio	18
Eva Coe	20
Mary Francis Creighton	22
Marie Porter	24
Anna Marie Hahn	26
Juanita Spinelli	28
Sue Logue	30
Helen Fowler	32
Lena Baker	34
Corrine Sykes	36
Louise Peete	38
Martha Beck	40
Ethel Rosenberg	42
Bonnie Heady	44
“Dovie” Dean	46
Betty Butler	48
Barbara Graham	50
Rhonda Martin	52
Elizabeth Duncan	54
Velma Barfield	56
Karla Faye Tucker	58
Judy Buenoano	60
Betty Lou Beets	62

Wanda Jean Allen	64
Marilyn Plantz May	66
Lois Nadean Smith	68
Lynda Lyon Block	70
Aileen Wuornos	72
Frances Newton	74

Finding Evil Women	
An essay by Tessa Livingstone	79

Thanks to	103
-----------	-----

Introduction

Born Bad?

On the 15th of August 1912, Virginia Christian celebrated her 17th birthday. The next day she was strapped into an electric chair and executed.

Christian, a black house maid, was convicted of murdering her employer Ida Belote, a 72 year old white woman, at her home in Hampton on the 18th March 1912. Belote frequently beat Christian and in mid- March 1912 an argument broke out between the two when Belote accused Christian of stealing a locket and a skirt. Belote then hit Christian with a spittoon. The dispute escalated when Christian and Belote ran for two broom handles which were used to prop up bedroom windows. Christian grabbed one and struck Belote on the forehead with it. In an attempt to stifle the screams, Christian stuffed a towel in her employer's mouth, which caused her death by suffocation.

When Christian left the house, she ran off with Belote's purse and a ring. Police quickly arrested Christian, who when questioned, admitted hitting Belote but was shocked to learn she was dead, claiming she had no intention of killing her employer.

Elizabeth City County Court tried and convicted Christian for murder and the trial judge sentenced her to death at the state penitentiary in Richmond. Then Governor William Hodges Mann declined to commute the sentence, despite a pleas from both Virginia's parents. After her electrocution, Christian's body was turned over to the state medical school because her parents didn't have the money to transport the body from Richmond. She became the last female minor to be legally executed in the United States.

At the end of the century, in the year 2000, the USA executed 85 condemned prisoners - only 2 of them were women; Betty Beets and Christina Riggs. While over the course of the 20th century over 8,000 prisoners were executed across the USA, yet only 50 of these were women (by the year 2005). Is this because women commit less crimes

or because the crimes they do commit are not as 'serious'? Or perhaps it is that our societies have far less of a desire to execute females and more of a need to 'protect' them?

Whatever the answers to these questions, the main issue which overrides all others must surely be: are some people born bad, or do the factors of nurture and environment play a much larger part in human behaviour than nature ever can?

Robert Priseman 2014

The Drawings

Mary Farmer

Irish born Mary Farmer was the third woman to be executed in the USA during the twentieth century. She was 29 years old.

Whilst living in a rundown house on Paddy Hill near Brownville she murdered her neighbour Sarah Brennan with an axe then stuffed the body in a trunk. Following this, Farmer went to the offices of the Attorney Francis P. Burns and told him she was Sarah Brennan and wished to transfer the title deeds for her home to Mary Farmer. Burns unwittingly carried out the transfer, Mary forged Sarah's signature, and the deeds were filed with the county clerk. Mary then told her husband, James, a local mill worker, that she had purchased the house for \$1,200 claiming she'd received money to buy the house from an uncle in Buffalo.

Sentenced to death, Mary Farmer was electrocuted at Auburn State Prison on the 29th March 1909.



Mary Farmer
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Virginia Christian

Born on the 15th August 1895, Virginia Christian was the first female juvenile to be legally executed in the United States.

A “wash girl”, Virginia murdered her employer, Mrs. Ida Belote, a 72 year old white woman, at her home in Hampton. Belote frequently hit Christian, and on the 18th March 1912, an argument broke out between the two when Belote accused Christian of stealing a locket and skirt. Belote hit Christian with a “spittoon”, the argument then escalated when Christian and Belote ran for two broom handles which were used to prop up bedroom windows. Christian grabbed one of the broom handles and struck Belote on the forehead. In an attempt to stifle Belote’s screams, Christian stuffed a towel down her employer’s throat, and Belote died of suffocation.

Christian was electrocuted in the State of Virginia on the 16th August 1912, one day after her 17th birthday.



Virginia Christian
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Ruth Snyder

Born on the 27th March 1895, Ruth Snyder was a mother and housewife from Queen's village, New York. She took out a \$48, 000 life insurance policy on her husband Albert Snyder, then murdered him, with the help of her lover, Gary Gray, acting as accomplice.

On the 20th March 1927, Ruth and Gary Gray garrotted Albert, stuffing his nose with chloroform-soaked rags, to help stage his death as part of a burglary. Investigating detectives noted that the burglar had left little evidence of a break in. Snyder's subsequent execution by electrocution was surreptitiously photographed by Tom Howard at the moment the electricity was running through her body. The photograph was taken with the aid of a customised miniature camera which was strapped to his ankle. It was famously published in the New York Daily Times.

Ruth Snyder was executed in Sing Sing Prison on the 12th January 1928.



Ruth Snyder
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Ada Leboeuf

A 38 year old middle-class Louisiana housewife and mother of four children, Ada Leboeuf was having an affair with the family doctor T. E. Dreher.

Together, Ada and her lover hired a trapper, James Beadle, to shoot dead her husband Jim Leboeuf, a power plant superintendent in Morgan City. Beadle was sentenced to life, whilst Ada Leboeuf and Dreher were both sentenced to death by hanging. While awaiting her execution Ada had a rocking chair brought into her cell, unlimited visitation rights and freshly ironed summer dresses. On the day of her execution, Ada stepped on the gallows trap door, clasped her hands in prayer and in a high pitched, trembling voice said “Don’t let me hang there too long. Don’t make me suffer any more than I have to. Oh God. Isn’t this a terrible thing? Oh God, who can do this thing? It is worse than murder itself”.

Ada Leboeuf was executed on the 1st February 1929.



Ada Leboeuf
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Eva Dugan

Born in 1878, Eva Dugan trekked to Alaska during the Klondike gold rush and became a cabaret singer.

She subsequently moved to Pima County, Arizona, where she worked as a housekeeper for a chicken rancher named Andrew J. Mathis. Shortly after her employment was terminated, Mathis disappeared, along with some of his possessions. The police discovered Dugan had a father in California and a daughter in White Plains, had been married five times and all of her husbands had mysteriously disappeared. She was subsequently arrested in White Plains when a postal clerk, alerted by the police, intercepted a postcard from her father in California. She was extradited back to Arizona and tried and convicted for the murder of Andrew J. Mathias.

Dugan was executed on the 21st February 1930 by hanging at the state prison in Florence. The execution was botched, which resulted in her decapitation. This in turn influenced the state of Arizona to replace hanging with the lethal gas chamber.



Eva Dugan
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Irene Schroder

Born in 1909 in Benwood, West Virginia, Irene married Homer Schroeder at the age of 15. They had a son, Donnie, a year later.

Irene left Homer and became a waitress. She then joined a gang and was involved in at least 11 murders. Known as the “Gun Girl” she and her gang eventually ran into trouble, coming to a bloody two-hour standoff with the police. Half naked and with her clothes in tatters, Irene tried to encourage the men in her gang to fight by promising those who survived the shoot-out a “wild night”. Tearing away her remaining clothes she stood up proudly and yelled: “if you survive this, I'll sleep with you tonight”.

Irene Schroder was executed by electrocution on the 23rd February 1923 at the age of 22, having been convicted of fatally shooting a state highway patrol officer.



Irene Schroeder
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Anna Antonio

“Little Anna” was a 28 year old Italian-American mother of three, who was married at the age of 16 to Salvatore Antonio.

She was reported as being a battered wife and was sentenced to death for having hired two men to murder her husband. Only 10 minutes before her scheduled execution she received the first of many stays. A 24 hour stay became a week stay which then became a month stay. During this period she barely ate and weighed less than 85 pounds when her execution was finally carried out. Many criticized State Governor Lehman for not saving Anna’s life. His response to his critics was, “The law makes no distinction of sex in the punishment of crime; nor would my own conscience permit me to do so”.

Anna Antonio was electrocuted in Sing Sing Prison on the 9th August 1934. At the time of her execution she weighed only 85 pounds.



Anna Antonia
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Eva Coo

Eva Curry was born on the 17th June 1889 in Haliburton, Canada. She moved to New York State in 1921 after marrying her husband William Coo.

In New York, Eva was running a brothel, when she was entrusted with the care of one of her employees, a handyman with learning difficulties named Henry Wright. After the death of Wright's mother, Coo embezzled his inheritance and burned his house for the insurance. She then conspired with another employee, Martha Clift, to murder him. On the 14th June 1934, the two women drove Wright to a remote location outside Oneonta, New York, where Eva hit Wright with a mallet and Martha ran him over with a car. They then dumped Wright's body beside the road to simulate a hit-and-run accident.

Coo was executed on the 27th June 1935 in the Electric Chair at Sing Sing Prison.



Eva Coo
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Mary Frances Creighton

Mary Frances Creighton was a 36 year old housewife who lived in Baldwin, New York. She was married to John Creighton and together they had a daughter named Ruth.

They lived together with another family, the Applegates. The father, Everett Applegate had sex with his own 12 year old daughter Agnes as well as with Creighton's daughter Ruth, who was 14 years old at the time. Mary Frances was a willing participant in the arrangement. She and Everett then conspired to poison Everett's wife, Ada, so that her daughter Ruth could marry "Uncle Ev".

Convicted of poisoning Ada Applegate, Creighton was electrocuted at Sing Sing Prison on the 16th July 1936. Whilst waiting to be strapped into the electric chair she collapsed several times, her legs apparently paralyzed and she suffered hysteria as a result of her sentence.



Mary Francis Creighton
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Marie Porter

37-year-old Marie Porter was the first woman to die in the electric chair in Illinois and only the second woman to be executed there.

She had ordered the murder of her brother, William Kappan on the 13th July 1937, in Belleville, Illinois, after he had refused to make Marie the sole beneficiary of his \$3,300 life insurance policy. Marie hired 22-year-old Angelo Giancola, allegedly her lover, and his 20-year-old brother John Giancola to help her. At trial in St. Clair Circuit Court, Angelo Giancola admitted firing the fatal shots and Marie was subsequently convicted of conspiracy to murder. Angelo was convicted of 1st degree murder.

Marie Porter was electrocuted at the Southern Illinois State Penitentiary in Chester on the 28th January 1938.



Marie Porter
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Anna Marie Hahn

Anna Marie Hahn was a 32 year old German immigrant who was the first woman executed in Ohio's electric chair.

In 1933 Hahn had decided to offer her services as a live in "nurse" to elderly men in Cincinnati's German community. Her first client was 73-year-old Ernst Kohler. He died on the 6th May 1933, leaving a house for Anna in his will. Four further victims followed; Albert Parker, Jacob Wagner, George Gsellman and George Obendoerfer who died on the 1st August 1937. Anna had persuaded George to visit Colorado Springs with her and her son. Once there he was taken ill and died in his hotel room. An autopsy revealed arsenic poisoning and in September 1937 she was charged with his murder. Autopsies on the four other men Anna had worked for also revealed poisoning. She was charged with five murders in total and sentenced to death.

Hahn was electrocuted on the 7th December 1938 at the Ohio State Penitentiary in Columbus.



Anna Marie Hahn
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Juanita Spinelli

Ethel Leta Juanita Spinelli was born in Kentucky on the 17th October 1889 and made history by becoming the first woman legally executed in California and the first woman in the USA to die in the gas chamber.

The leader of a criminal gang who nicknamed her “the Duchess”, by 1940 she and her husband Michael Simeone were living in San Francisco with their three children. Together they committed armed robberies on stores, gas stations and motorists. On the 8th April 1940, whilst robbing a barbecue stand in San Francisco they shot its owner, Leland S. Cash, dead. On the 14th April 1940 while on a picnic with the gang on the banks of the Sacramento River, Ethel added chloral hydrate to a glass of whisky which she persuaded gang member Robert Sherrard to drink. He fell unconscious and they threw him into the river, leaving him to drown. After Sherrard’s body was found Ethel was arrested and the revolver used to kill Leland S. Cash was discovered, with her fingerprints still on it.

Juanita Spinelli was executed on the 21st November 1941.



Juanita Spinelli
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Sue Logue

Born in 1896, Sue Logue was a teacher and farmer's wife who lived in South Carolina.

Logue's husband, Wallace, was killed by a neighbour, Davis Timmerman, after an argument they had involving money. Sue wanted revenge for the death of her husband and arranged for an acquaintance named Clarence Bagwell to kill Timmerman. Unfortunately for her, Bagwell wasn't able to keep quiet about his involvement in the murder and told the story to a third party. When the police heard what had happened they went to arrest Logue. Initially she refused to give herself up, until the local judge, Strom Thurmond arrived. He entered her house unarmed and persuaded her to hand herself in.

Logue was executed in the Electric Chair on the 15th January 1943. Bagwell was also sentenced to death for his part in the crime.



Sue Logue
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Helen Fowler

Helen Fowler lived in the red light district of Niagara Falls in New York State.

A mother of four, Helen was found guilty of collaborating in the murder of a 63 year old white man named George Fowler, with the help of her common law husband George Knight. George Fowler had been “out on the town” on the evening of his death, apparently boasting that he was carrying a large amount of cash. Helen Fowler and her partner beat George to death with a hammer in order to steal his money. Three of her children testified against her at trial.

Helen Fowler was executed by electric chair at Sing Sing prison on the 16th November 1944 at the age of 37 along with her partner George Knight. She was the only Afro-American woman to be electrocuted in New York State in the 20th Century.



Helen Fowler
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Lena Baker

44-year-old African-American Lena Baker was the first and only woman to be executed in Georgia's electric chair.

She was convicted of murdering Ernest B. Knight, a gristmill owner in Cuthbert, Georgia, who had employed her as a maid. Knight often mistreated her and on the night of the 29th April 1944 Lena claimed that she'd had to act in self-defence after Knight had locked her in the mill and threatened to beat her. She managed to get a hold of his gun and fired it to prevent him killing her.

Baker was executed on the 5th March 1945, going to the chair calmly whilst proclaiming her innocence. She later received a posthumous pardon from the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles in August 2005. They accepted they had made a serious error in not granting clemency and that Baker was guilty of voluntary manslaughter rather than murder. A movie was made about her life in 2008 titled 'The Lena Baker Story'.



Lena Baker
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Corrine Sykes

Corrine Sykes was a 20-year-old illiterate black housemaid who stabbed her employer, Freda Woodlinger, to death on the 7th December 1944.

Mrs Woodlinger had hired Corrine three days before the murder. Sykes had given a false name and references to hide the fact that she'd just been released from prison having served 11 months for the theft of jewellery. On trial Sykes claimed that her boyfriend, J.C Kelly, had threatened to kill her and her mother if she did not steal for him. Doubts were raised as to whether the slight Sykes would have had the physical strength to inflict the stab wounds on her employer. Other doubts were also raised about her delicately balanced mental state. The all-white jury weren't convinced and convicted her of first-degree murder.

Corrine Sykes was electrocuted on the 14th October 1946 at the Rockview Penitentiary in Belefonte.



Corrine Sykes
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Louise Peete

Louise Peete Judson was born in Bienville, Louisiana on the 20th September 1883 and lived a life of crime, despite benefiting from an expensive education and a cultured upbringing.

In 1912 Peete was accused of murdering her then boyfriend Joe Appel, but was acquitted on the grounds of self-defence. Yet eight years later she was found guilty of the murder of Jacob Charles Denton who was shot dead in Los Angeles. For this Peete served 18 years in California's Tehachapi Prison before her release on parole in 1939. Then on the 30th May 1944 she murdered her social worker, Margaret Logan. Peete had been living with Logan and her husband at the time.

Peete was convicted of murder in the first degree and was executed in San Quentin's gas chamber on the 11th April 1947.



Louise Peete
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Martha Beck

Martha Beck was born Martha Jule Seabrook on the 6th May 1920, in Milton, Florida.

By 1947 she had two children by two different men, neither one wanting anything to do with her. She placed an advertisement in a lonely-hearts column in 1947, which was answered by Raymond Fernandez. Fernandez visited Martha in Florida and she eventually moved with him to New York. Fernandez regularly answered lonely-hearts ads to meet women, who he then robbed when the relationship soured. He revealed his scheme to Martha and she decided to collaborate, posing as his sister or sister in law. But she grew to become jealous and angry if he had sex with his victims. In 1949 she found Fernandez in bed with one such candidate, Janet Fay, and she smashed her skull with a hammer.

Beck was sentenced to death by electrocution in Sing Sing prison, New York, on the 7th March 1951.



Martha Beck
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Ethel Rosenberg

Ethel Rosenberg was born on the 25th September 1915, in New York City. Of all the women executed in the USA since 1903, she is the only one not to have been executed for murder. Along with her husband Julius, she was convicted under Federal authority for conspiracy to commit espionage.

A soviet information courier named Harry Gold had been arrested on the 23rd May 1950. He implicated Ethel's brother David Greenglass in a conspiracy to pass information on to the USSR. Greenglass in turn implicated both Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Julius was arrested in July 1950 and Ethel in August of the same year. Whilst on trial, Greenglass claimed Ethel had typed notes containing secret information, which were then given to Gold, who in turn passed them on to Anatoly A. Yakovlev, a Soviet vice consul in New York.

The Rosenberg's were condemned to death and on the evening of the 19th June 1953 and were electrocuted in Sing Sing prison, New York.



Ethel Rosenberg
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Bonnie Heady

Bonnie Brown Heady was born on the 15th July 1912 in Burlington Junction, Missouri.

A former gangster's moll and prostitute, Heady along with her accomplice Carl Austin Hall abducted 6-year-old Robert Greenlease Jr. on the 28th September 1953. Heady collected Robert from his school in Kansas City, where she'd told a teacher she was an aunt who'd come to take him to visit his "sick" mother. The Greenlease family received a ransom note the following day for \$600,000, despite Hall having already shot and buried young Robert. On receiving the money, Bonnie and Hall went to St. Louis where they partied until Hall deserted Bonnie; he was arrested a few days later. On the 7th October 1953 Robert Greenlease's body was unearthed at Heady's home in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Hall and Heady were subsequently charged with murder and sentenced to death in the gas chamber at the Missouri state penitentiary in Jefferson City on the 18th December 1953.



Bonnie Heady
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

“Dovie” Dean

Blanche “Dovie” Dean was a 55-year-old grandmother and mother of six children, who lived in Clermont County, Ohio.

She admitted to killing her 69-year-old husband, Hawkins Dean, after she put rat poison in his milk. Dean had originally tried to frame her son by a previous marriage for the murder, but eventually confessed when the sheriff commented that “any woman who could accuse her son of such a crime could easily have done it herself.” Dean said the murder took place after a number of violent arguments with her new husband Hawkins (her third), who she felt could not “perform his husbandly duties.” Dean said: “He wanted a housekeeper and I wanted a home.”

On the 15th January 1954, Dovie Dean was executed in Ohio’s electric chair wearing a “simple green dress buttoned down the front, white anklets and brown shoes.”



“Dovie” Dean
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Betty Butler

Betty Evelyn Butler was 26 years old when she died in the electric chair. Butler had been found guilty of murdering Evelyn Clark, a woman with whom she and her two children, a daughter, Quo Vadis and son, Donald, had been living.

Clarke had offered to pay Butler and her children to live with her in exchange for sex, an offer Butler accepted being as she was destitute. The couple apparently had numerous domestic disputes, up to and including the murder, when Butler beat Clarke unconscious then drowned her in a lake. According to Butler, she had defended herself against Clarke's "unwanted advances", while other testimony suggested that Betty was bisexual and murdered Clarke in a rage over her attentions to another woman.

On the 12th June 1954, Betty Butler became the last woman to be executed in Ohio by electrocution.



Betty Butler
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Barbara Graham

Barbara Graham was born Barbara Elaine Ford on the 26th June 1923 in Oakland, California. Graham was the third woman in California to be executed by gas.

In 1953, after giving birth to 2 children, serving a stint in prison and spending years working as a prostitute, Barbara married Henry Graham. Through him she met Jack Santo and Emmett Perkins, and in March 1953, along with two further accomplices named John True and Baxter Shorter, she undertook the robbery of 64-year-old Mabel Monohan in Burbank. Barbara reportedly gained entry to Monohan's house by asking to use her phone. Once inside, the gang demanded money and jewels from Monohan while Barbara "pistol-whipped" her. They then suffocated Monohan with a pillow. After they were arrested, True testified against Graham and she was sentenced to death for robbery and murder, along with Perkins and Santo.

Graham died in the gas chamber at San Quentin State prison on the 3rd June 1955.



Barbara Graham
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Rhonda Martin

Born Rhonda Belle Thomley in 1907, Martin confessed to murdering six people, including three of her daughters, her mother and two husbands.

Before her arrest she had worked as a waitress in Birmingham, Alabama. Her crimes only surfaced when police began to investigate the illness of her husband, Ronald, in the March of 1953. Under questioning Rhonda admitted to poisoning her fourth husband, Claude, in 1951. Eight months after Claude's death she married his son Ronald, who was subsequently left paralyzed from the effects of poison. On the 19th May 1956, Rhonda Martin was charged with murdering her second husband George Garrett in 1939, 3-year-old Emogene Garrett who died in 1937, six year old Carolyn Garrett in 1940, 11 year old Ellyn Garrett in 1943, her mother Mary Francis Gibbon in 1944 and Claude Martin, who died in 1951.

Rhonda Martin was electrocuted in Kilby Prison, Montgomery, Alabama on the 11th October 1957.



Rhonda Martin
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Elizabeth Duncan

Elizabeth Ann Duncan, also known as Ma Duncan, was born in 1904.

In November 1957 she moved in with her son Frank, in Santa Barbara, California. A few months later Frank met Olga Kupczyk. Elizabeth demanded he end the relationship and when he refused she threatened to kill Olga. On learning Olga was pregnant Elizabeth hired Luis Moya and Augustine Baldonado to kill her. Moya and Baldonado visited Olga's apartment on the 18th November, repeatedly hit her about the head, then drove the body to the Casitas damn and buried her. Olga's body was discovered on the 21st December, when Baldonado led police to the grave, after being arrested on unrelated charges. Elizabeth came to trial on the 24th February 1959 where she pleaded not guilty for reasons of insanity. However, she was found sane and convicted of first-degree murder.

Elizabeth Duncan was executed in San Quentin's gas chamber on 8th August 1962.



Elizabeth Duncan
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Velma Barfield

The first woman to be executed by lethal injection was Velma Marge Barfield.

Born on the 23rd October 1932, in North Carolina, by the age of 19 Barfield had 2 children by her then husband, Thomas. In 1966 Thomas was injured in a car crash after which Velma became depressed and addicted to prescription drugs. Thomas died in 1969 and Velma re-married Jennings Barfield in 1970. Six months later Jennings died of arsenic poisoning and in 1977 Barfield began a relationship with Stuart Taylor. She took out forged cheques from his bank account and when he became suspicious she mixed rat poison into his beer. He later died and Velma was charged with his murder. During interrogation she also confessed to killing her mother and two elderly people; John Henry Lee and Dollie Edwards.

Barfield was subsequently executed on the 2nd November 1984, at the Central Prison in Raleigh, North Carolina.



Velma Barfield
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Karla Faye Tucker

Karla Faye Tucker was born in Houston, Texas on the 18th November 1959.

On the 13th June 1983, whilst high on a cocktail of methadone, valium, heroin, marijuana, rum and tequila, Karla and Daniel Ryan Garrett entered the apartment of Jerry Lynn Dean with the intention of stealing his motorbike. Once inside they found Dean in bed and attacked him with a hammer. Dean began making gurgling noises so Tucker finished him off with a pickaxe to “make the noise stop”. She then spotted Deborah Thornton hiding in the room and attacked her repeatedly with the same pickaxe, finally leaving it embedded in her torso. Tucker and Garrett then stole Dean’s money and car. Karla Faye Tucker was arrested on the 20th July 1983 and sentenced to death on the 25th April 1984.

She was executed 14 years later, at Huntsville, Texas, by lethal injection on the 3rd February 1998.



Karla Faye Tucker
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Judy Buenoano

Born in Texas on the 4th April 1943, Judy Buenoano's mother died when she was 4 years old.

Buenoano became known as the "Black Widow" following a guilty verdict for the murder of her husband after she poisoned him with arsenic. In addition to the conviction for murder, she received additional sentences for attempted murder and insurance fraud following the drowning of her paralyzed son and an attempt to kill her fiancé with a car bomb. A previous boyfriend also "mysteriously" died whilst dating Buenoano. Her motive was believed to have been greed, as she collected \$240,000 in insurance money.

Executed in Florida State Prison on the 30th March 1998, by electrocution, Buenoano, then aged 54, was the first woman to be executed in Florida for over 150 years.



Judy Buenoano
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Betty Lou Beets

Betty Lou Dunevant was born on the 12th March 1937. She was partially deaf and claimed to have been sexually abused by her father as a child.

She was sentenced to death for shooting her 5th husband, Jimmy Don Beets, at their home in eastern Texas. Beets had a criminal history prior to her arrest for his murder, which included public lewdness, shooting her second husband twice in the back of the head and attempting to run over her third husband with a car. Both men survived and testified at her trial where the prosecution claimed she killed Jimmy Beets in order to collect \$100,000 Life Insurance. His body had been discovered in a Wishing Well on their property where Police also discovered the remains of her fourth husband, Doyle Wayne Baker.

Beets was executed by Lethal Injection on the 24th February 2000, at Huntsville, Texas.



Betty Lou Beets
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Christina Riggs

Born in Lawton, Oklahoma in 1971, Christina Riggs was a registered nurse and mother of two small children, Justin and Shelby, by two different fathers.

In 1997, whilst at the family home in Sherwood, Arkansas, she planned to sedate her children with amitriptyline before killing them with undiluted potassium chloride. However, the first injection on her son was unsuccessful, so Riggs smothered them both instead. She then laid the children on her bed, covered them with a blanket, and wrote suicide notes. Following this Riggs unsuccessfully attempted suicide by taking twenty-eight amitriptyline pills and injecting herself with undiluted potassium chloride. Riggs' defence claimed she was suffering from depression and was apparently unwilling to have her children split up after her envisioned suicide.

Christina Riggs was executed by lethal injection on the 2nd May 2000. She was the first woman to be executed in Arkansas since 1845.



Christina Riggs
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Wanda Jean Allen

One of eight children, Wanda Jean Allen was born on the 17th August 1959.

In 1981, she was living with her then girlfriend, Dedra Pettus. On the 29th June 1981, they got into an argument and Allen shot and killed Dedra. Due to bruises and powder burns on Pettus's body, forensic evidence suggested that Allen had pistol-whipped Pettus before shooting her at point-blank range. Allen pleaded guilty to manslaughter and served half of a 4-year sentence. Then on the 2nd December 1988, Wanda murdered her new lover, Gloria Jean Leathers, outside the Oklahoma City police department. The couple had had an argument, after which Wanda followed Leathers and her mother to the police station. She then shot Leathers who died 3 days later. Allen was charged with first-degree murder.

Wanda Jean Allen spent 12 years on death row before receiving a lethal injection at the Oklahoma state penitentiary on the 11th January 2001.



Wanda Jean Allen
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Marilyn Plantz May

Marilyn Plantz May hired her teenage boyfriend Clifford Bryson and his friend William McKimble to kill her husband James Plantz for his life insurance policy of \$319,000.

Entering his home after work, James Plantz was ambushed by Bryson and McKimble and beaten with baseball bats while his wife and children lay asleep in bed. Marilyn then arose and instructed Bryson and McKimble to “burn him” to make it look like an accident.

40 year old Marilyn Kay Plantz was executed on the 1st May 2001, by lethal injection at Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. Marilyn and Jim Plantz’s daughter Trina Plantz Wells, 21, appealed to the board to spare her mother’s life. Wells was reported as having cried throughout the entire hearing, having reconciled with her mother after having had no contact with her for 13 years.



Marilyn Plantz
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Lois Nadean Smith

Lois Nadean Smith was convicted of murdering 21-year-old Cindy Baillee in Gans, Sequoyah County on the 4th July 1982.

Baillee was a former girlfriend of Nadean Smith's son, Greg. Along with her son and another woman, Nadean Smith picked Baillee up from a motel on the morning of the murder. As they drove away, Nadean Smith confronted Baillee regarding rumours that Baillee had arranged for Greg Smith's murder. Lois choked Baillee and stabbed her in the throat despite Baillee denying the plot as they drove to the home of her ex-husband in Gans. At the house, Nadean Smith taunted Baillee with a pistol, finally firing several shots. Baillee fell to the floor, and while her son reloaded the pistol, Nadean Smith laughed and jumped on Baillee's neck. She then fired four shots into Baillee's chest and two to the back of her head.

61 year old Nadean Smith was executed by lethal injection on the 4th December 2001.



Lois Nadean Smith
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Lynda Lyon Block

Lynda Lyon Block was born on the 8th February 1948 in Orlando, Florida. Never close with her mother, who she claimed had been both physically and mentally abusive, Block's father died of heart failure when she was 10.

In 1993 Block shot a police officer dead with a handgun and was condemned to death in Alabama's electric chair, known as "Big Yellow Mama".

On the 10th May 2002, Block walked to her execution wearing a white prison outfit and black hood over her shaven head. Her eyes were wide, blank and emotionless. At 12.01 a.m. the execution began when a 2,050-volt shock was sent through her body for 20 seconds; steam came from the sponge on her head and the electrode on her left leg. She then received 250 volts for a further 100 seconds. At 12.10 a.m. Block was declared dead. Department of Corrections Commissioner Michael Haley said her execution was routine. With this act, a century of using electricity on condemned women in the USA came to an end.



Linda Lyon
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Aileen Wuornos

Born Aileen Pittman in Rochester, Michigan, on the 29th February 1956, Wuornos never met her father, Leo Pittman, a schizophrenic who was incarcerated at the time of her birth.

When she was almost four years old, her mother abandoned her to her grandparents, Lauri and Britta Wuornos. She later stated that her grandfather had sexually assaulted and beaten her as a child and that in 1970, at the age of 13, she became pregnant, having been raped by one of her grandfather's friends. In 1991 she confessed to killing six men between 1989 and 1990, claiming they had all raped her while she was working as a prostitute, although shortly before her death she admitted there were no rapes and that robbery was her motive.

Aileen Wuornos was executed by lethal injection at a Florida State Prison on the 9th October 2002.



Aileen Wuornos
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Frances Newton

Born on the 12th April 1965, Frances Elaine McLemore Newton was a married mother of three who lived in Harris County, Texas.

Recently separated, Newton was convicted of killing her husband and children with a .25 caliber pistol. She maintained her innocence from the moment of her arrest in 1987 until her execution in 2005. However, three weeks before the killings, Newton had bought life insurance policies on her husband, her daughter, and herself which were each worth \$50,000. On these she named herself as beneficiary on her husband's and daughter's policies, claiming she forged her husband's signature to prevent him from discovering that money had been set aside to pay the premiums. Newton was also found to have placed a paper bag containing the murder weapon in a relative's home shortly after the murders.

Frances Newton was executed by lethal injection on the 14th September 2005, at Huntsville, Texas.



Frances Elaine Newton
18 x 15 cm, Graphite on Paper, 2014

Essay

Finding Evil Women

In just over a century 52 American women have been executed as punishment for the crimes they have allegedly committed. The United States of America is one of the only first world countries that still metes out capital punishment to those it deems most criminal. This most heinous of punishments, you would think, should fit the most heinous of crimes. But does this harsh punishment ever fit the crime? And if it is reserved for the worst of the worst, does that mean these women are truly evil. Is anyone?

My journey started for me when artist Robert Priseman asked me to write a piece about female executions to complement his current work, drawings of 36 women near the time of their execution (there were no easily accessible photographs for the other 16 women killed). Robert is an unusual artist, his work concise and often chilling. The antecedent to that series of portraits was entitled 'No Human Way to Kill', in which Robert explored the art and ritual of execution - hanging, gassing, lethal injection, electrocution, the guillotine and garrotte - which is, if not gruesomely beautiful, then certainly compelling.

The work we have done together on this project is a voyage into the minds of 'evil' women and a unique exploration of how these women tick.

The thirty-six women Robert drew set me thinking. Many of the women seemed 'normal' on the surface. They had husbands, wives, children and friends. They went to work, they did the housework, they raised their kids, and yet they also killed, sometimes without mercy. Why did these women kill? What was their horrible trajectory and did they, or does anyone, deserve execution? Who is truly evil? The women guilty of the crime? Or the state guilty of the execution?

I use the word 'evil' because that is what their accusers called it, but in fact the word is difficult to pin down. For me, the word 'evil' denotes darkness, a profound immorality and a nameless fear. The

philosopher, Susan Neiman suggests that ‘the effect of evil is a way of marking the fact that it shatters our trust in the world’. It is often represented as something utterly inhuman. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn took a different view again. In prison, he wrote that to be human was to be both terrible and glorious. Hannah Arendt’s notion of the ‘banality of evil’ touched on something similar, a latent capacity within the most ‘normal’ of people to commit evil acts.

“Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart, and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains... an uprooted small corner of evil”. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956*

Our cohort of women covers a period of a hundred years, from 1909 to 2005. Eight women’s stories stood out to me as being emblematic for each of the groups below.

They are:

Anger: Aileen Wuornos	29 Feb 1956 - 9 Oct 2000
Despair: Christine Marie Riggs	2 Sep 1971 - 2 May 2000
Love: Barbara Graham	3 Jun 1955 - 3 Jun 1955
Greed: Judy Buenoano	4 Apr 1943 - 30 Mar 1998
Drugs: Kimberly McCarthy	11 May 1961 - 26 May 2000

Miscarriage of Justice:

Virginia Christian	15 Aug 1895 - 16 Aug 1912
Lena Baker	8 June 1901—March 5 1945
Wanda Jean Allen	17 Aug 1959 - 11 Jan 2001

Who were these women? And how could America keep executing people in the modern day, however heinous the crime?

One reason might be Aileen Wuornos

Aileen Wuornos. Aileen wasn’t just a storm, she was a tornado.

Aileen's Story

Born in Michigan, she was abandoned by her mother Dianne, a flighty teenager, and her violent father Leo. She and her brother, Keith, and two other cousins were left to their merciless grandparents. Grandpa Wuornos was a hard drinking man with a nasty temper and penchant for hitting children. By the time she was eleven Aileen was having sex with boys in exchange for a bit of money or cigarettes. As soon as her grandmother passed away, her grandfather threw both Keith and Aileen out of the house. Keith had a good friend in the area and his mother agreed to take him on, but Aileen, abused and angry, hit the road. She was only fifteen. She must have been sad, frightened and desperately angry but her steely will kept her moving. There is a certain camaraderie on the road, taking whatever life gives and living in the moment. She was a free spirit, a lovely vagabond with only a change of clothes in her pack.

The years accumulated and without intending to, she found herself gradually moving from Michigan to Ohio, West Virginia and the Carolinas.

So it was, that she surfaced in Florida, seeking sun and a place to put her head. Florida is good for old people, what with the yearly migration of blue-haired human snow-birds rushing back to the warmth of a southern sun. She even got married in this easy climate, to an older man with time, patience and affection, but Aileen, she wasn't used to being a housewife and they soon divorced. Once more she was back on the streets. Prostitution kept her from starving but she must have felt that she wanted more, someone who loved her or, if not that, liked her company, and it was in one of Florida's many bars, in one of Florida's many strip malls that Aileen found Tyria Moore.

Tyria was a small young woman, gay and slightly gushing. Her parents, living far away, knew nothing of what she did and when her parents arrived to see Tyria and Aileen together, they were horrified. But Tyria was determined to keep with this goddess, so tall and exciting, and she fell in love.

Tyria loved Aileen and for a while life seemed good. Tyria would do

anything for Aileen and while that must have felt wonderful, it was also alien, and Aileen's life was beginning to unravel. The work of a prostitute is nasty and dangerous and Aileen was now feeling her age, raddled and depressed with too many ghosts nipping at her ankles. She snapped. She fuelled her anger and killed a man, taking his money and his car, pulling off the licence plates as she left so no one could find her. She'd had enough of mean men, predatory men, sleazy men who want blow jobs, sadists and rapists for a long, long time.

By 1991 Aileen had killed seven men during one long year. By then the Florida police knew there was a serial killer on the loose, but they failed to track her down. Naturally they thought they were looking for a man, but the police were nothing if not thorough, driving from pawn shop to pawn shop, tavern to tavern, sweeping a radius of many miles, and finally they caught a break, an incriminating fingerprint was discovered to be Aileen's. It was time for the police to pounce. On one fine evening at the Last Resort Cafe, a crew of bikers were about to ride from Florida to Texas with Aileen riding pillion. Instead the police stormed in. She was arrested, swearing as she was taken away.

They 'threw the book' at Aileen, charging her with cheque forgery, disorderly conduct, car theft, assault, armed robbery, and finally murder. Aileen wasn't a model prisoner and she was still full of hate and anger, but for Tyria, she did what she felt was right, not for herself, but for her lover. For Tyria Aileen confessed everything in a smoky room, crying, laughing and, for once, telling the truth, even though she knew she would be in prison for many years, knowing that she would never hear tyres on the road or sand under her feet again.

The British documentary maker Nick Broomfield interviewed Aileen in prison. Through several long and rambling interviews she opened up about her life and struggles, her anger and loneliness, her life on death row and her views of God. Like many people in prison she found religion and Aileen Carol Wuornos wrote a confession. It was in August 2002, a week before her execution and the confession was to God.

"Dear Lord Jesus I know I've done a lot of wicked things in my life and lord god know I will the wrath of hell" she wrote, "I need to bring myself to your throne begging. If you forgive me of the over-welling evil I have done in this world".

We are left, then, with Aileen at death's door. A woman who was a serial killer, who had already spent twelve years in Death Row and had halted her appeals maybe, as she said, she wanted to die. She was forty-six.

Her idea of a just and kind God might have slipped by then, for her final words on-camera were "Thanks a lot, society, for railroading my ass."

On the 9th October 2002, Aileen Wuornos was executed by the State of Florida by lethal injection. She was 46.

Why was Aileen full of anger and hate? Why did she hate most people? And why did she kill? Was she, as many people believe, born Evil?

With a mother who didn't want her, a father who left before she was born and her malevolent grandparents, Aileen Wuornos must have experienced both neglect and rejection from the time of her birth.

Sue Gerhardt wrote an illuminating book called 'Why Love Matters' about the first few years of childhood. She wasn't interested in happy children but instead, focussed on the most troubled children. Her book is partly a deconstruction of what happens when a baby has difficult parents.

It is during the last phase of pregnancy that things tend to go wrong. A baby hears her mother's reassuring soothing heartbeat, a rhythm that says to mother and baby that all is well. But what happens if a pregnant mother's heartbeat suddenly becomes faster? The baby hears it and is frightened by the change of pace. There is no stability. Parents shouting, angry. Slamming doors, baby's heartbeat jumping, time stretches, cortisol up, stress up, child gulping. Baby exhausted. The question is, do traumatic times leave an impact?

Gerhart believes they could. A new born baby needs more than milk, he also needs decent parents. "While her parents seem unable to imagine that her baby needs help... the child is buffeted by emotion...her parent figures are in some way missing, physically or psychologically, absent or abusive. What is missing is the regulatory partner that the child needs to make sense of his or her

experiences...and to keep (herself) on an even keel... leaving the child in a state of virtual emotional abandonment” *Sue Gerhardt, ‘Why Love Matters’ 2004*

Christina’s Story

Christina Marie Thomas must have known about abandonment. For one thing her husband left her, though only after he had punched their son Justin so hard he was sent to hospital. After that Christina took her children and left for Oklahoma City and her mother. Christina, though a nurse, was always strapped for cash. Still floundering after a year, Christina started to write bad checks and then lost her car, leaving her without transport.

All her resources spent, she became deeply depressed. Looking at her children she found only anguish for the whole family and in a moment of great despair, she drugged and then smothered her children, wrote a suicide note, took a lethal dose of Elavil, a strong antidepressant, and tried to inject enough potassium chloride to kill herself. Her mother found her the next day. She was barely alive. Her children were not.

“I started out in a boat with a small hole. But the hole kept getting bigger and no matter how hard you bail, you keep sinking” she said later “I was tired and I gave up. Suicide seemed like the only thing I could do”.

It is known that women who kill their children are pariahs in prison and Christina, was almost wholly isolated when she was imprisoned. So it wasn’t surprising that she wouldn’t let her lawyers argue against execution and was allowed, only two years later, to do what she had wanted to do in the first place, to see “her children in the sky once again”. Her last words were “I love you, my babies” and on 3rd May 2000, and against her mother’s plea, she was executed by lethal injection.

Should she have been executed? Christina’s depression was exacerbated by her early life. Her stepbrother had started to abuse her sexually when she was just seven years old, abused, too, by a neighbour and within a year she was smoking, drinking, eating too

much and smoking pot. By the time she was sixteen she was overweight and pregnant, but she wasn't allowed to keep her child, a fact that is tragic even now and common. It must have been a huge wrench and one which might have made her more conflicted when her subsequent children were born.

During the trial, Prosecutor Larry Jegley suggested that Christina was deeply self-centred and found her children a nuisance. It is certainly true that she preferred to compete in karaoke contests rather than stay at home with the children every night, and it's true that the children were very young and shouldn't have been left alone so often, but that is hardly cause for execution. Jegley found her pleas of insanity or depression to be excuses. In his closing statement he said "She claims she was horribly depressed, she was overweight, she was a single mom and she didn't have enough money. My response to that is welcome to America".

Did Christina really want to die? In the end Christina insisted on her execution, not only because she had botched her own death but that she wanted to be with her children.

On the 2nd September 2000, Christina Riggs was executed by the State of Oklahoma by lethal injection. She was 28.

A friend of mine, after trying to have a baby for many years, finally got pregnant. Little Rosie was a lovely child, and did what all children do. She made funny noises, she slept and she cried and she seemed the sweetest kid ever, and after a couple of weeks, I went to see her.

What I saw was perplexing. I saw my friend Ali trying to be a good mother but it was clear that she hadn't bonded. What she really wanted was to do was to put a cushion over her perfect baby and kill her. With infinite care, and letting baby Rosie herself decide what she wanted to do, Ali began to see her baby as a person to be loved. It wasn't easy. Ali was in shock after giving birth, unconsciously reaching back to her own sad childhood, frightened and unsafe. Taking small steps and with help from professionals, Ali learnt she could focus on baby Rosie and let go of her mother's clutches. I can't remember how long it took for Ali to feed and love her baby, but it took some time.

Infanticide has been around for thousands of years. In the 10th century BC, the Spartans threw male babies into the snow to prove their hardiness. Apparently some died of cold while the other stronger and maybe cleverer children were brought into their elite fighter squad. It is still true that adults kill children. In 1999 the FBI found that 450 children were murdered by their parents. This is probably an underestimate. Women and men tell lies about how their children die, tragically, through things like cot death, or falling down the stairs. But perhaps the saddest way to go is when a mother, impoverished, depressed, alone and unaided simply can't go on.

Barbara's Story

Barbara Graham was beautiful. There was no doubt about that. She loved sex, she loved her bleached blond hair and she loved her friends. She was a wild child, living on the streets while her mother did time in a female reformatory and her father long gone; a man she didn't know. Years earlier when Barbara was only a teenager, she left her extended family and married Harry Keilhamer. They had two children, but the marriage didn't work, and it was Harry who raised the two boys while she drifted away, marrying again and then again, always searching for love. Like Aileen, Barbara had become a rolling stone, a woman who had nothing to hold onto, desperate for connection.

By then World War II was in its dying moment, the boys were coming back from the war and seductive Barbara threw herself into her work as a "seagull", a prostitute for the homecoming boys, her beauty and her body out for sale. And then, in that tricky time, she married Henry Graham, a man twenty years her senior. Henry was a bartender by trade, but his real work was in drugs and crime.

Barbara was no fool. Although her education was patchy she was a quick learner and very astute. She was the sort of person who could remember everything. Her knowledge of other people, what they did and what they felt, was a sort of protection.

But then things went horribly wrong.

Barbara was not a born killer, but she was a chancer. Through Henry she met two thugs named Jack Santo and Emmett Perkins. The pair had been sizing up 64 year old widow Mabel Monohan who was rumoured to keep substantial amounts of cash at home. They brought Barbara into their heist along with two more friends, John True and Baxter Shorter, accessing the widow's home by Barbara asking to use the phone. They thought it would be a pushover. They couldn't have been more wrong. Mabel Monohan was a frail woman but she was not an easy mark. She refused to hand over any valuables. Her house was ransacked, she was pistol-whipped, there was blood everywhere and frail old Mabel, hands bound behind her back, was murdered by asphyxiation, but hadn't given them anything. So far so bad.

The newspapers publicised the murders and John Santo, Emmet Perkins and Barbara Graham realised how vulnerable they were, so the three of them hi-tailed out of the city as soon as they could, changing hotels and motels in an attempt to keep away from the cops, finally alighting in an apartment in an old machine shop.

At this delicate moment things finally fell apart for the three characters in this unhappy tale. The police had been informed that Barbara was seen going into the apartment. They lay low until all the gang was inside, then the police crashed into their hide out, and, much to the policemen's surprise, up jumped Emmett Perkins, completely naked, while Jack was lying in bed with an erection, and Barbara was literally caught with her panties down.

One of the most likeable traits of Barbara was her loyalty to her friends. She would never turn anyone in to the police, she looked after her friends and had a kindness and playful affection for the people she went about with. In prison she refused to implicate her friends, even though she could have lightened her sentence.

Barbara became a star during the trial. The Los Angeles' five daily newspapers devoured the story. The morning Examiner, the Times, the Mirror, the Herald-Express and the Los Angeles Mirror all wanted her. The media adored it. Everyone wanted a piece of her. They loved to hate her.

But would there be death by media, a miscarriage of justice?

Did the frenzied crowd stand in the way of a fair trial?

There were two reporters who believed in Barbara, San Francisco Chronicle reporter Bernice Freeman Davis and Edward Montgomery from the Examiner. They were seasoned journalists and they knew how to work the police and how to wrangle interviews with felons. Davis interviewed both Graham and True, and noted that “Barbara had been convicted largely on John True’s testimony, and from my own experience I knew that he was careless with the truth.” And Edward Montgomery, reporter for the San Francisco Examiner first raised the argument that the left-handed Graham could not have pistol-whipped Monahan with her right hand, as described by True. On the same occasion, Montgomery recounted a conversation he had had with Emmett Perkins in prison. According to Montgomery, Perkins stated that Monahan was beaten with her own cane, rather than a gun.

Although the press nicknamed her ‘Bloody Babs’ and essentially tried her in public, there were many people who thought she was innocent, a fall guy for the real murderers; that she was entrapped. Her attorney even brought in her son, Tommy, to soften the jurors, but to no avail.

After all of the brouhaha and the sadness, Barbara was convicted by a hanging judge, leaving us speculating. Was she guilty or innocent?

Some paparazzi or maybe a court official must have recorded what happened that day because the details about her execution are now available. This is what happened.

“At 11.34 a.m. Barbara was finally guided into the twin-chaired gas chamber and helped to sit in the chair on the right. In the blue-green light, the lower part of her face below the sleeping mask looked as white as ivory. Her natural chestnut hair, grown back from being bleached blond, looked soft and shiny. Four brown-uniformed officers quickly strapped her ankles, forearms, and chest to the chair. They left the chamber, the last one to leave patted her knee and told her to take a deep breath, “and it won’t bother you”. Turning toward his voice Barbara grunted derisively: “How the hell would you know?”

The big airtight door was swung shut and pressure locked. Witnesses

saw Barbara swallow nervously. Several times she wet her lips. At some point she moved her lips, perhaps praying.

It was a full minute before she heard the plunger-like sound of a cheesecloth bag, containing two golf-ball-size cyanide pellets, being lowered into a concrete vat of sulphuric acid directly underneath her chair. The sound, though very faint, startled her and she tensed momentarily. Her heartbeat increased to a frenzied rate.

The death fumes were invisible, but their slight bitter almond odour reached Barbara's olfactory nerves and her nostrils flared once, briefly. Then she drew in a deep, deliberate, tortuous breath. Almost at once, her head nodded, lips twitching, then slumped forward, chin on chest. Her heart slowed until it finally chugged and gushed to a final halt. Barbara drooled and regurgitated onto the front of her suit, and her bowels and bladder emptied inside her clothes. It took Barbara seven minutes to die. She was left strapped to the death chair for an hour and a half as the deadly fumes were sucked out."

On the 26th June 1955, Barbara Ford Graham was executed by the state of Florida by gas chamber. She was 31.

Although many of these women executed in the US have different trajectories, there are also similarities in their histories.

David Farrington, Professor of Psychological Criminality at Cambridge University, has co-written a brilliant book with Brendon Welsh entitled 'Saving Children from a Life of Crime: Early Risk Factors and Effective Interventions.' In it he outlines ten main factors, known as the Farrington Factors that predispose children to a life of crime. They are:

- 1) Low IQ
- 2) Low School attainment
- 3) High impulsivity and poor concentration
- 4) Low family income
- 5) Large family size
- 6) Criminal parents
- 7) Harsh discipline/inconsistent parenting
- 8) Poor supervision
- 9) Separating from parents
- 10) Being male

Of course these executed women do not have “being male” in common, but they do seem to have many of the other factors in common. It’s somehow shocking to think that we can predict which children will become violent criminals, but his studies are meticulous, exhaustive and disturbingly conclusive. He also posits a very strong argument that by ameliorating these factors, children could be saved from a future life in crime.

Kimberly’s Story

Dorothy Booth was in her seventies and a pillar of the establishment. As an older resident, she must have known the main street in downtown and its famous banner announcing “Welcome to Greenville, the Blackest Land. The Whitest People”. Someone took it down in the seventies, but the message was clear. Blacks were not wanted.

Kimberly McCarthy lived in Greenville too, but was born under very a different star. Her husband, Aaron Michaels, was well known as a black activist, a controversial man who helped start the New Black Panther group, a mover and shaker, who described his work as a “self-help group for African Americans and poor people”. Kimberly was an occupational therapist and health aide and, although it couldn’t have been very lucrative, the family survived but didn’t thrive. Texas is not the most inviting place to live if you are black.

With her son grown and her activist husband busier than ever, Kimberley changed. Her interest in activism had never really moved her and when she started on drugs, she and Michael divorced. Her slide into addiction had started slowly but gradually her need for crack cocaine became entrenched.

White Americans use five times more drugs than black Americans, yet blacks are sent to prison for drug offenses at ten times the rate of whites. It is an invidious and unfair process but it gave Kimberly limitations. She knew that black users were more likely to go to prison so she was more careful. Her drugs were not contaminated and she knew how to use them too, but she was on a slippery slope. The drugs felt less potent, the costs spiralled, and every day, she had

to have more.

Kimberly had tried to kick it, but her drugs were stronger than she was and on the 21st July 1997, she found herself penniless and in a frenzy of fear, her need for drugs so imminent.

Desperate, she did the only thing she felt she could do. She knocked on her neighbour, Dorothy Booth's, door and asked for sugar. The old ploy worked. She knew Dorothy would open the door and take her to the kitchen. Once there, Kimberly picked up a butchers knife, stabbed Dorothy five times, beat her with the candelabrum, stole her purse and cut off Dorothy's finger so she could drag off her diamond wedding ring. Dorothy's hand must have shuddered as she did it, for Booth was still alive. Leaving the house after cleaning up, she must have felt a pang, but the need for drugs was uppermost in her mind and as she left in Dorothy's Mercedes-Benz she was frenzily clutching the diamond ring.

By the time Kimberly had pawned the diamond ring and got her drugs she was in a good mood. She settled down in her little house with relief. She felt just fine. Then, slowly, the true horror of what she had done came back to her. She had killed her neighbour Dorothy. She knew so many people in the area, she had worked in most of their houses, made coffee and gave her clients succour when they were in pain. Did she cry? Or was she past all that?

Perhaps she knew her life was untenable because the next day Kimberly McCarthy was easily caught and charged with murder. There was no attempt at disguise, her driver's licence was covered in blood, her fingerprints and her DNA found on the murder weapon. It seemed an open and closed book, until Kimberley told them that she hadn't been alone in the killing, her druggy friends JC and Kilo had been with her. The police started chase but the elusive JC and Kilo were nowhere to be seen. After an exhausting few weeks the police realised that Kimberly had taken them on a ride. JC and Kilo didn't exist.

And then the police got two more surprises. A thorough rummage through Kimberly's files brought out documents that showed Kimberly had a murky past. Over a period of several years, it turned out that she had also murdered and robbed two old women. They were Jettie Lucas aged 81 and 85-year-old Maggie Harding, two older

women who had lived in Dallas.

Evil, morally bankrupt, self-loathing, Kimberley told herself that she couldn't wait to get to god. "This is not a loss, this is a win. You know where I'm going. I'm going home to Jesus. I love all... God is great".

Kimberly was ready. Outside the prison was a sombre party, a hundred people or so out in the sunshine, waving placards saying 'no' to the death penalty. McCarthy's execution was the 500th in Texas since 1976. That's a lot of killing for one state. But Kimberly wouldn't have heard the crowd. She was dying.

On the 26th June 2013, Kimberley Lagayle McCarthy was executed by the state of Texas by lethal injection. She was 52.

Does criminality encourage drug use or does the drug use cause crime? It seems that women who take drugs are more likely to commit crimes for financial gain than men, while men, who have higher rates of drugs, commit a number of different crimes, although it seems that this gap is beginning to narrow. There is undoubtedly a connection between drug use and crime in both sexes but it is a complex correlation to decipher exactly. Drug use in women is sometimes seen to be a precursor to eventual crime but one that probably will never happen. That sense of being careful keeps them away from the law, but if caught, being a woman turns out to be problematic. She is much more likely to be incarcerated for a drug offence than a man, 29% versus 53% in American state prisons

Judy's Story

Judias Welty was her name though she rarely used it, not only preferring to go by the first name Judy but also using several aliases as well. Judy was born in a small hardscrabble Texas town called Quanah.

Her father was an itinerant farm labourer. When Judy was just four

years old her mother died of TB and the family fell apart. Unable or unwilling to cope with his four children, Judy's father sent her and her little brother to their grandparents while adopting out her two older siblings. When her father finally remarried he took Judy and her brother back but it was anything but a blissful reunion. The children were beaten, starved, burned with cigarettes and treated like slave labour by both her father and stepmother.

Judy had become a new and nasty person.

Judy snapped at fourteen and attacked her father, stepmother and stepbrothers, landing her 60 days in jail. Rather than returning home, Judy entered a girl's reformatory and stayed until she graduated at eighteen.

It was then that her alias, Anna Schultz became useful. She moved to Roswell, New Mexico and took work as a nurses' aide. She gave birth to a son "out of wedlock" which was very stigmatised in 1950's America. There she now was, a nineteen year old nurses' aide with small son Michael in tow, seemingly vowing to never be poor again. And she had figured out how to start her empire. Her weaponry was arsenic and fire and bombs, insurance money the goal.

The first thing she wanted was to be married. James Goodyear obliged, and daughter, Kimberly followed in 1967. Then, in 1968, Judy opened her hair and nail salon in Pensicola, Florida. James must have had money because he set the business up extremely well. But by 1971 Judy wanted more. James Goodyear had to go. Motivated by greed she murdered him by putting arsenic in his vitamins and collected the insurance money. Nobody realised what she had done. It was like a conjuring trick. First he was there and then he was gone. And then she had more money.

However, it didn't last. Once again, money was needed. Her home was torched by a 'persons unknown', and the insurance money flowed in again.

1978 was a bumper year. Boyfriend Bobby Joe Morris succumbed, leaving good money through insurance. Judy also began to make forays against her son, Michael Goodyear, who was gradually becoming very ill. Eventually he became a paraplegic and she looked after him for some time, but in 1980 she took him for ride in a canoe.

The canoe rolled over and Michael, weighed down by his leg braces, drowned. She had killed her own son, but only after causing his paralysis in the first place by poisoning him with arsenic. The roll went on. In 1980 Judy killed her then boy-friend Gerald Dosset. And finally, in 1983 Judi tried to kill her husband, John Gentry.

John Gentry was bombed while sitting in his car waiting for his wife, Judy. Judy was waiting too, but she had decided to be out of reach when the bomb blasted the parking lot. She didn't want to be in the vicinity at all. But when she eventually arrived at the scene she saw John on the tarmac, wounded and bloody, sirens screaming but still alive. It wasn't what she wanted.

John Gentry did not die and during his time in hospital he began to talk, first with the police and then with Judy. The police found that the 'vitamins' Judy had given him included a large dose of arsenic. It had made him so sick he stopped taking them, a sensible precaution that probably saved his life. Naturally Judy did all she could to manage this new and horrible situation but, as the weeks went on, the issue of the bomb didn't go away. The police were now looking at her more closely, wondering whether she had a past that might incriminate her, and she began to realise at last what a disastrous mess she had made for herself. For the first time in over fifty years she wasn't in the driver's seat.

Judy loved wealth, good restaurants, Caribbean cruises and expensive clothes. Judy protested that she had never killed anyone but only her daughter, Romely believed her.

Judy was executed by electrocution in the Florida State Penitentiary at Starke on Monday 30th March 1998, in their old work horse of an electric chair named "Sparky". Her head had been shaved to avoid her hair catching on fire and to improve conductivity. To further improve connection a wet sponge was placed on her head under the electrified cap. The "Black Widow" had no last words.

On the 30th March 1998, Judy Buenoano was executed by the State of Texas by lethal injection. She was 54.

Judy or Judias or Judi or Ann Schulz, all of these names boil down to one person, one of the worst female serial killers in history. But she

is not the only woman who used health insurance scams. Many women have been known over the years as “Black Widow.” Committing murder for financial gain, the capacity to be organised and meticulous especially for life insurance fraud, is fairly common. Certainly these are crimes of opportunity and greed, but does it also reflect a bit on how women are marginalised in society. Imagine a woman with a background of abuse, an ongoing belief that no-one cares about her, a family that has never been safe and the expectation only of fear and poverty. This is what Judy experienced when she was young.

Poverty has been an undercover thread throughout this essay. The widening gap between the rich and the poor has decimated America. The poor are getting poorer and the rich, it appears, don’t care. Already there are many destitute women, men and families who live on their wits, and pretty much nothing else. The black population is probably especially vulnerable because the law, even at this time, is not always fair.

David V. Baker writes about the consequences of this social inequality and is particularly interested in what goes on in the courts. He has found that black women are routinely discriminated in jury selection. In one case a judge agreed to the prosecutor striking a black woman saying “You have got women on the jury. What function does a Black woman fulfil that the White woman doesn’t?” Justice and impartiality at work?

Virginia’s Story

Virginia Christian, as a young black woman at the turn of the 20th century, suffered the classic racism and poverty so endemic in the US South. Her white employer, Isa Belote, took her on as a laundress, knowing that she was mentally handicapped and giving her the smallest remuneration possible. Isa often mistreated Virginia horribly but Virginia just meekly took it. And then one day the anger spilled out. Virginia Christian grabbed for a broom handle, hit Belote on the forehead and in the ensuing melee killed her employer and ran away. The police arrested Christian who admitted to hitting her employer but was shocked when she found out Belote was dead.

A heartrending letter from Virginia's mother was sent to the Judge:

My dear mr governor

*Please for give me for Bowing low to write you a few lines: I am the mother of Virginiany Christian. I have been pairalized for mor then three years and I could not and Look after Gennie as I wants too. I know she dun an awful weaked thing when she kill Miss Belote and I hear that the people at the penetintry wants to kill her but I is praying night and day on my knees to God that he will soften your heart so that She may spend the rest of her days in prison. they say that the whole thing is in yours Hands and I know Governer if you will onely save my child who is little over sixteen years old God will Bless you for ever ... If I was able to come to see you I could splain things to you better but I cant do nothing but pray to God and ask him to help you to simpithise with me and my truble I am your most umble subgeck,
Charlotte Christian.*

A Chicago newspaper picked up the case, campaigning that a seventeen year old maid should not be executed, especially in the mitigating circumstances. But neither the media nor the letter helped. The Judge was well known as a “hanging judge” and, in spite of her age and perhaps because she was a black woman who had killed a white woman, Virginia Christian was electrocuted in Richmond, Virginia, on the 16th August 1912. The execution happened quickly and her family being too poor to afford a burial, Virginia's body was given to the local medical school for dissection.

On the 16th August 1912, Virginia Christian was executed by the state of Virginia by electrocution. She was 17.

Lena Baker

Of the thirteen poor black women who have been executed from 1903 to 2012, Lena Baker is the one who most poignantly illustrates issues that black women face. She was poor, ill-educated, underemployed, desperate and sexually abused. In 1945 she shot her white employer after he kept her against her will for weeks, virtually

as a sex slave. The jury consisted of 12 white men, her court appointed attorney didn't call one single witness and the trial lasted only one day. Lena maintained her innocence to the very end. "What I done, I did in self-defense or I would have been killed myself," reads her final statement, "I am ready to meet my god." Lena Baker was electrocuted on the 5th March 1945, in Reidsville State Prison in Georgia. In 2005 the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles overturned her conviction and granted Lena a full and unconditional pardon.

On the 5th March 1945, Lena Baker was executed by the state of Georgia by electrocution. She was 44.

Corrine Sykes

Corrine Sykes was another young, impoverished black woman. She had been hired by Freda Wodlinger on the 4th December 1944, to do the house chores. Three days later the police found Wodlinger dead from stab wounds. Cash, jewellery and a sable fur piece was missing from the house and Corrine was immediately suspected. Corrine was illiterate, she gave conflicting stories and although she managed to sign a written confession it seemed unlikely that she had written it. Her lawyer told the jury of 12 white men that "We will make no attempt to exculpate Corrine in this shocking crime." Corrine was also probably too small to have wielded the knives that had killed Wodlinger. Regardless of guilt or innocence, because of her IQ of 63 she never should have been executed. But she was, Corrine Sykes was executed by electrocution in Pennsylvania on the 14th October 1946. She had many sympathisers, and thousands attended her funeral. On the day of the execution city buses were full of black housemaids going home early, and it was said that an uncanny quiet settled over the city.

On the 14th October 1946 Corrine Sykes was executed by the state of Pennsylvania by electrocution. She was 22.

Finding these women to be truly evil has been a difficult task. According to psychologist Phillip Zimbardo “The line between good and evil is permeable and almost anyone can be induced to cross when pressured by situational forces”.

These women had many of these situational forces in common. Every one of the women had been abused and abandoned during early childhood. Many came from impoverished families and most had their own financial issues. They were marginalised and discriminated against. Arguably, if these women were truly evil, then what of the state who in turn killed them?

Tessa Livingstone, PhD, FRSA

Permissions

“Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart, and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates Draft with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains... an uprooted small corner of evil”.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956, ISBN 0-06-013914-5

“The line between good and evil is permeable and almost anyone can be induced to cross when pressured by situational forces”. *The Lucifer Effect, Philip G. Zimbardo, ISBN 9781400064113*

‘While her parents seem unable to imagine that her baby needs help... the child is buffeted by emotion...her parent figures are in some way missing, physically or psychologically, absent or abusive. What is missing is the regulatory partner that the child needs to make sense of his or her experiences...and to keep (herself) on an even keel... leaving the child in a state of virtual emotional abandonment’
Sue Gerhardt, ‘Why Love Matters’ ISBN 1-85391-817-5, 2004

David Farrington, Professor of Psychological Criminality at Cambridge University has co-written a book with Brendon Welsh entitled ‘Saving Children from a Life of Crime: Early Risk Factors and Effective Interventions.’ In it he outlines ten main factors, actually known as the Farrington Factors. *David Farrington, Professor of Psychological Criminality Cambridge University ‘Saving Children from a Life of Crime: Early Risk Factors and Effective Interventions’ by David Farrington and Brendon Welsh. ISBN-13 9780195378993*

Thanks to:

Andrew Downie
Terri Hawkins
Ally Seabrook
Hannah Seabrook
John Packer
Nathan Eastwood
Zoe Jewell
Lisa Newman
Sharon Cox-Channer
Russell Channer
Shona McGrahan

St. Thomas More Catholic School
SE9 Container Gallery

