



American Crime Research

Copy sheet 14b

Dalton Prejean [black, Louisiana], sentenced to death in 1978 and executed in 1990. He was 17 years old when he murdered a police officer in 1977. He was tried before an all-white jury. His IQ was measured at 71. He was abandoned by his mother at the age of two weeks and was raised by a relative who was violent. From the age of 13 he spent time in institutions and was diagnosed with various mental illnesses including schizophrenia. At age 14 he was committed to an institution for killing a taxi driver. Medical opinion recommended long-term hospitalization under strict supervision. He was nevertheless released after three years. Despite appeals for clemency in 1989 and 1990 he was electrocuted on 18 May 1990, 12 years after being sentenced to death.

Chris Thomas [white, Virginia], sentenced to death in 1991 and executed in 2000. After his adoptive parents died when he was 12, Chris Thomas became involved in petty offending and drug abuse. Psychological reports described him as an isolated, angry, depressed, alienated teenager. His intense relationship with 14-year-old Jessica Wiseman culminated in their plan to kill her parents. Without an adult present, while still under the effects of alcohol and drugs, and having slept for only two hours in the previous 40, Thomas confessed to both murders. He later said he had not fired the second fatal shot at the mother, whose killing resulted in Chris Thomas' death sentence (he received a life sentence for the murder of the father). The jury never heard evidence that Jessica Wiseman may have fired this shot. She was released in 1997 at the age of 21.

Curtis Harris [black, Texas], executed in 1993. He was 17 years old at the time of the crime – the murder of a white man in 1978. He was one of nine children brought up in extreme poverty. He was regularly beaten as a child by an alcoholic father. At the trial his jury was all white. He was sentenced to death in 1979. His conviction was overturned, he was retried and sentenced to death again in 1983. In 1986 he was examined by a professor of psychiatry, who found that he had a low IQ (77) and had brain damage resulting from beatings suffered as a child. None of the information about his upbringing or mental capacity was raised by his lawyer at the trial. His appeals against the sentence failed and he was executed on 1 July 1993.

Robert Anthony Carter [black, Texas], sentenced to death in 1982 for the murder of Sylvia Reyes in 1981 and executed in 1998. One of six children in one of the poorest families of a poor Houston neighbourhood, Robert Carter was abused throughout his childhood. His mother and step-father would whip and beat the children with wooden switches, belts and electric cords. At the age of five he was hit on the head with a brick. At the age of 10 he was hit so hard on the head with a baseball bat that the bat broke. He received no medical attention for these injuries. Shortly before the murder of Sylvia Reyes, Robert Carter was shot in the head by his brother. He afterwards suffered seizures and fainting spells. The jury was not told about his age at the time of the crime; the fact that he was mentally retarded, brain damaged and had suffered brutal physical abuse as a child; or that this was his first offence. The jurors took 10 minutes to decide that he should die.

clemency · náði
fatal · drepani
overturned · kolldømdur
he was retried · málið varð tikið uppáftur
seizures · hjartatilburður
fainting spells · svímilsí
jurors · nevningar



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Christopher Burger [white, Georgia], executed in 1993. He was the first child offender to be executed in Georgia under its current death penalty law. He was 17 at the time of the murder, committed in 1977, for which he was convicted. He was sentenced to death in 1978. Fourteen years later he was executed by electrocution. At his trial he was represented by a lawyer who had never acted in a case where the accused risked death penalty before. The jury was not told that Christopher Burger had a low IQ, that he was mentally ill and brain damaged from physical abuse received as a child, or that he suffered from a highly disturbed, unstable upbringing and had attempted suicide at the age of 15. In 1989 a professor of psychiatry examined Christopher Burger and found brain damage and mental illness. He was executed on 7 December 1993.

Joseph John Cannon [white, Texas], executed in 1998 for the murder of Anne Walsh in 1977. He was sentenced to death in 1980. At the age of four, Joseph Cannon was hit by a truck and left hyperactive, with a head injury and a speech impediment. Unable to function in the school, he was expelled at the age of six and received no other education. He turned to glue sniffing and other solvent abuse, and at age 10 he was diagnosed as suffering from brain damage. Suffering from severe depression, he attempted suicide at the age of 15. He was diagnosed as schizophrenic and mentally retarded. From the age of seven up to the time of the murder Joseph Cannon suffered repeated and severe incestuous abuse. By the time he was killed, Joseph Cannon had spent more than half his life on death row.

Dwayne Allen Wright [black, Virginia], sentenced to death in 1991 for the murder of Saba Tekle in 1989 and executed in 1998. Dwayne Wright grew up in a poor family in a poor neighbourhood of Washington DC, with a lot of criminal drugs activity, where he witnessed gun violence and murder. His father was in prison. His mother, who suffered from mental illness, was often unemployed for long periods. When he was 10, his 23-year-old half-brother, to whom he was very close, was murdered. After this Dwayne Wright developed serious emotional problems. He did poorly at school. Between the ages of 12 and 17, he spent periods in hospital and juvenile detention facilities. During this time he was treated for "major depression with psychotic episodes"; he was evaluated as retarded and doctors found signs of brain damage.

Gerald Mitchell [black, Texas], sentenced to death in 1986 and executed in 2001. Gerald Mitchell was on death row for 15 years after being convicted by an all-white jury for the murder of a white man, committed when he was 17 years old. Evidence presented at trial indicated that Mitchell had been assessed as having an IQ of 75 and had a long history of substance abuse.

current · galdandi
speech impediment · talubrek
solvent · upploysingarevni
juvenile detention · ungdómsfongsul
assessed as · mettur at
substance abuse · rúsevnismissnýtsla



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Sean Sellers [white, Oklahoma], sentenced to death in 1981 for shooting his mother and step-father and a shopkeeper and executed in 1999. Born to a 16-year-old mother and raised by various relatives, he was exposed to violence and physical abuse from an early age and became involved with drugs and Satanism. He was found to be chronically psychotic and to have symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia. He was diagnosed with multiple personality disorder in 1992. On death row he became very religious and engaged in writing and artwork with a view to helping others learn from his experience. One of his trial jurors appealed for clemency, recalling that the jury never believed that he would be executed but that they feared his early release if they sentenced him to life imprisonment.

Glen McGinnis [black, Texas], sentenced to death in 1992 and executed in 2000. Glen McGinnis was born to a mother who was addicted to crack cocaine and who worked out of their one-bedroom flat as a prostitute. He suffered repeated physical abuse from her and his stepfather, who raped him when he was nine or 10. He ran away from home at the age of 11 and lived on the streets of Houston where he shoplifted and stole cars. He was sentenced to death by an all-white jury for the shooting of Leta Ann Wilkerson, white, during a robbery in 1990. Various institution officials said that he was non-aggressive and that he flourished in the structured environment of prison.

Ruben Cantu [Latino, Texas], sentenced to death in 1984 and executed in 1993. He was 17 at the time of the offence. He was represented by an inexperienced lawyer, had a troubled family upbringing and was of limited intellectual abilities.

T.J. Jones [black, Texas], sentenced to death in 1994 and executed in 2002 for the murder of a white man during a carjacking. Jones was assessed as having an IQ of 78, and to be very immature for his age at the time of the crime. According to an expert at the trial, his "grossly poor judgment" was compounded by alcohol and drug abuse which began at the age of 13.

Gary Graham [black, Texas], sentenced to death in 1981 and executed in 2000. He was born to a mentally ill mother and an alcoholic father and was exposed to violence from an early age in the poor neighbourhood of Houston where he grew up. He became involved in drug and alcohol abuse and by the age of 15 had a record for thefts. Aged 17 he was under arrest for a string of armed robberies and aggravated assaults when he was charged with the murder of Bobby Lambert, white. The jury of 11 whites and one black sentenced him to die. He was convicted on the testimony of a single eyewitness, who was never checked out. His lawyers did not interview other, better-placed witnesses, none of whom identified him as the gunman and several of whom said he was not the gunman. No physical evidence linked Gary Graham to the shooting. The jury never heard forensic evidence that a gun found on him at the time of his arrest could not have fired the fatal bullet.

multiple personality disorder · psychological disorder where people seem to have two or more personalities. Typically has to do with childhood trauma.
jurors · nevningar
clemency · náði
institution officials · tænaustufólk í fongslinum, fangavörðar
flourished · stórtreivst
carjacking · álop á fólk í bili, bílrán
assessed as · mettur at
grossly · ógvuliga, óvanliga
was compounded · gjærdust verri
aggravated assaults · álop undir tyngjandi umstæðum
testimony · vitnisfrágreiðing
forensic · rættarlæknafræðilig



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Frederick Lashley [black, Missouri], executed in 1993. He was the first child offender to be executed in Missouri for 60 years when he was subjected to lethal injection on 28 July 1993. He was convicted and sentenced to death by an all-white jury in 1982 for the murder of his cousin in 1981. He was under the influence of drugs at the time of the killing. He had been abandoned at a young age by his mother and had been brought up by relatives. He began drinking alcohol heavily at the age of 10 and at the time of the crime was homeless. At his trial he was represented by a lawyer who had never acted in a case where the accused risked death penalty before.

Johnny Garrett [white, Texas], executed in 1992. He was convicted of the murder in 1981 of a 76-year-old white nun. He had a long history of mental illness and was severely sexually and physically abused as a child. This history was not revealed at the trial. Between 1986 and 1992, three medical experts reported that he was chronically psychotic and brain-damaged as a result of head injuries sustained as a child. Appeals for clemency from Pope John Paul II and from the Franciscan Sisters' religious community to which the murdered nun belonged did not help and Johnny Garrett was executed by lethal injection on 11 February 1992.

Napoleon Beazley [black, Texas], sentenced to death in 1995 and executed in 2002. He was sentenced to death in 1995 for the murder of a white man committed when he was 17 years old. He had no prior arrest record. He was tried by an all-white jury. One of the jurors was later shown to be a racist. Another juror was a long-term employee of one of the victim's business partners. Two co-defendants later said that their testimony at the trial had been false. The prosecutor repeatedly called Beazley as a predatory "animal" in front of the jury. Many witnesses testified about good aspects of his character. He was a model prisoner.

Toronto Patterson [black, Texas], sentenced to death in 1995 and executed in 2002. Toronto Patterson was sentenced to death for the killing of three-year-old Ollie Brown, whose body was found in her home along with that of her sister and their mother. All three, who were cousins of Toronto Patterson, had been shot. After his arrest, the 17-year-old Toronto Patterson gave police a statement without a lawyer present, in which he admitted to being present at the scene of the crime but not to having committed the murders themselves. After being aggressively interrogated for four hours, Toronto Patterson confessed to the shootings. He claimed at his 1995 trial that the confession had been threatened out of him, and he maintained his innocence of the murders.

Steve Roach [white, Virginia], executed in 2000. He had been sentenced to death in 1995 for the 1993 shooting of Mary Ann Hughes, his only recorded act of violence. Born into a family with frequently absent parents, Roach dropped out of school at 14 because they wanted him to do chores. An expert testified at trial that Roach had only poor control over his impulses and was very immature as a result of the lack of structure in his home life. He was thought dangerous as he owned a shotgun, but no adult, including the police, had removed it from him.

was subjected to · fekk
lethal · drepanði
sustained · sum hann fekk
clemency · náði
prior · frammanundan
jurors · nevningar
co-defendants · sum vóru ákærdir saman við honum
testimony · vitnisfrágreiðing
prosecutor · ákæri
predatory animal · rovdýr
interrogated · avhoyrdur
recorded · skrásetta
act of violence · valdsgerð
absent · fráverandi