

Ohio Justice and Policy Center

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://ohiojpc.org/2021/01/06/lisa-montgomery/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

by [Marais Jacon-Duffy](#) | Jan 6, 2021 | [Blog](#)

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It is understandably uncomfortable to learn that sex trafficking can (and does) occur in our very own backyards. What is especially difficult to accept is how much sex trafficking involves children and that victimization can take many forms. Child sex trafficking victims get thrown into a devastating and destructive cycle of violence that spins all the way into adulthood, which can result in committing crimes and culminate in incarceration.

In a survey conducted in Ohio of 115 individuals who became involved in the sex trade while under the age of 18, 40 percent were victims of family sex abuse, 24 percent were victims of physical abuse in their families and 33 percent had a close family member in the sex trade.^[1]

Further, research has shown links between child sexual abuse and long-term criminality.^[2] Child sexual abuse victims were more likely than those with no known history of abuse to engage in all types of criminal behaviors. Specifically, female victims of child sexual abuse have an increased risk for engaging in violent crime because females tend to deal with the consequences of abuse primarily by internalizing, rather than engaging in externalizing and acting-out behaviors, which are believed to characterize the pathway followed by abused boys.^[3]

These heartbreaking realities are best seen in the case of Lisa Montgomery. Lisa is currently the only woman on federal death row, and on January 12, 2021, the federal government plans to execute Lisa for the crime that she committed, which would make her the first woman executed on federal death row in nearly 70 years.^[4]

Lisa is a survivor of horrific child sexual abuse, domestic violence, incest, countless rapes, beatings, and child sex trafficking which can be read about in more detail [here](#).^[5] One example of the horror Lisa experienced occurred when she was around fifteen years old, when her mother invited men to the house to have sex with Lisa in exchange for money and services. Lisa was told, by her mother, that she had to pay for her room and new indoor plumbing by submitting to the gang rapes.

In 2004, while experiencing a psychotic break,^[6] Lisa killed Bobbie Jo Stinnett. She was willing to plead guilty and accept a sentence of life without parole, but the federal government insisted on seeking a death sentence. The jury sentenced Lisa to death without learning about Lisa's severe mental illness or the unbelievably devastating trauma that she endured her entire life.

Although Lisa's legal team is fighting to stop the execution, it is critical now more than ever to keep sharing Lisa's story on social media and use #SaveLisa to spread awareness. Otherwise, we will continue to hear tragic stories like Lisa's, in which trafficking victims are treated as criminals first, and never as victims.

To learn more about Lisa's case, please visit www.savelisa.org or check out the following articles listed and cited below to learn how child sexual abuse and sex trafficking victimization can turn a victim into an offender ultimately contributing to an endless cycle of violence that our federal government now wishes to add to.

^[1] Williamson, C., Perdue, T., Belton, L., & Burns, O. (2012). Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio. Ohio Human Trafficking Commission Final Report, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260339717_Domestic_Sex_Trafficking_in_Ohio.

^[2] Nina Papalia et al., *Child Sexual Abuse and Criminal Offending: Gender-Specific Effects and the Role of Abuse Characteristics and Other Adverse Outcomes*, 23 Child Maltreatment 399 (2018), available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1077559518785779>.

^[3] *Id.* at 408.

^[4] The last executions, both in 1953, were of Bonnie Hedy, killed in a gas chamber in Missouri, and Ethel Rosenberg, killed by the electric chair in New York.

^[5] See www.savelisa.org.

^[6] Lisa has multiple mental disorders, including bipolar disorder and temporal lobe epilepsy. Her years of victimization caused Lisa to dissociate from reality. She developed a dissociative disorder and Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Lisa's trauma was so severe that it compromised her neurological functioning and development.

^[7] For additional news publications related to Lisa Montgomery's case, see: Ed Pilkington, *A Lifetime of Torture: The Story of the Woman Trump is Rushing to Execute*, The Guardian, Jan. 5, 2020, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/lisa-montgomery-death-row-execution-history>; Rachel Louise Snyder, *Punch After Punch, Rape After Rape, a Murderer Was Made*, N.Y.

Times, Dec. 18, 2020, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/18/opinion/sunday/lisa-montgomery-execution.html>; Lauren Gill, *The Life Story of Lisa Montgomery*, Slate, Dec. 21, 2020, available at: <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2020/12/lisa-montgomery-federal-execution.html>.

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