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VENTURA CO. COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

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To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Karen Severson, and I am currently incarcerated at the California Institution for Women (CIW). I have been incarcerated since 1988, for 2nd Degree murder, serving a term of 15-to-Life, **with the possibility of parole.**

I am writing because of something that happened at my last Parole Board Hearing in March 2009. I was denied parole, for the 5th time, based on the nature of the crime. (I was 17 years old in 1985 when the crime happened, and being involved with other girls we collectively murdered a fellow schoolmate out of teenage jealousy and rebellion.) Today I am a 41 year old woman, and happy to say, transformed.

Anyway, I am writing because one of the problems in my past, (that the Parole Board doesn't seem to understand) is the fact I was molested for 7 years by an older female cousin. (This started when I was 6 years old and ended when I was 13).

Long story short, I was adopted and she used my adoption against me by telling me I wasn't really loved, and I would be sent back to the mean mother who gave birth to me and hated me. (She of course, "really loved me"). It was believable to me, as I was only 6 years old and she seemed to know what she was saying. If I didn't comply, she would get verbally and sometimes physically aggressive.

I'm not writing about her. I have dealt with her and we have made our amends.

I'm writing because the Parole Board Commissioner (Mr. Biggers) didn't believe that I couldn't tell anyone and when I tried to explain that I believed my cousin's lies, he said, "That's bull."

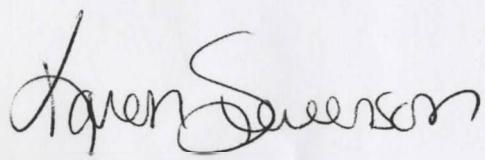
Now, part of my past social history is made up because of the false beliefs and molestation inflicted upon me. I'm not making excuses or justifying my actions as a teenager. But I am looking for someone to help me explain this to the Parole Board.

Perhaps a letter, or something from someone that can help me. I feel so helpless when I try to explain childhood sexual abuse. Once again, I feel I'm either being victimized by the Parole Board, or being caused to take blame for having something inflicted upon me, out of my control.

Could you please assist me in this? I don't even know what to ask for, so I'm desperately reaching out to anyone who may have a clue about the repercussions of child abuse, and how it does effect the way one thinks and acts.

Thank you for at least taking time to read this. I appreciate any help I can get.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Karen Severson".

Karen Severson