



PROFILE OF
LEANDER FOSTER



Full Name	LEANDER FOSTER
Prisoner Number	241559
D.O.B.	May 18, 1977
Crime(s) Convicted Of	First Degree Murder Armed Robbery Felony Firearm
Date of Crime	May 3, 1994
Conviction Date	February 3, 1995
Age at Time Crime was Committed	16-years-old
Age at Time Entered Prison	17-years-old

Brief description of offense and prisoner's role in it.

I took someone's life whom my aunt told me was trying to hurt her. I was the principal in my crime.

What difficulties have you experienced as a juvenile living among adult prisoners?

I entered a place where I had to learn how to live all over again. Guys preyed on me being naive and my ignorance. I received notes from adult prisoners telling me that I had to choose a certain person to hang out with. When I refused, everyday I came out my cell there were some type of attempt of force to make me choose either a particular person or a group of people. I was swung on, grabbed from behind many days walking to chow. My property was stolen from my cell while I was at school. It has been weeks I stayed in my cell to avoid these troubles, cause I seen how serious they were, and telling wasn't an option. I was too scared to even think about it. Then I seen a guy around my age who I was familiar with get boarded up in his room and get raped repeatedly, and there was nothing the corrections officers could do but beg and plead for the adult prisoner to stop and unbarricade the door.

How have your difficulties experienced as a juvenile living among adult prisoners negatively affected you?

For a long time I dealt with this vision (the rape of the guy who was my age) and the thought scared me to the point I started to carry a homeknife to protect myself against anyone who might want to try me. And this landed me in segregation. Through my experiences I don't trust no one around me, because it seems like everybody has an ulterior motive in some form or fashion. It's a constant struggle and fight for a child's survival in an adult prison, because it weighs on you mentally and emotionally to endure everyday of your life in a prison environment.

How have you resolved these difficulties or dealt with them?

I put everything in God's hands. I stop letting my environment dictate who I am, what I would do and how I would think. I stop fearing man and put my energy into productive thinking and how I could better myself and become more positive and start thinking positive. Prison isn't a place to go to to make friends or befriend people, so I mind my business and keep to myself. In the event that I need advice, support or someone to talk to I rely on my family, cause I know they will always have my best interest at heart. If that don't work then I will pray on it and ask God for guidance and understanding.

How has a life of incarceration changed you?

Prison helped change and shape my perception on how I once perceived things. Prison is where I really began to think and develop a thought process. Where I began to contemplate, rationalize, weighing my options and analyzing what I was doing, who I was, and the transformation I had to make from a boy to a man.

As a child, I thought as one and allowed my environment and what others said control me and my outlook on life. Society's environment influenced how I thought and how I acted. But with maturity and growth I realized that everything started with me, and I would continue to be controlled and influenced by my environment if I didn't take control of being my own individual. In life we all make mistakes, it's a part of life. But it's what you take and learn from those mistakes that can and will make you a better or worse person. We all experience life differently. We all go through peer pressure, being popular and unpopular, not wanting to be the outcast cause everybody laughs at you. But as a child you don't see this or think about it. It took prison for me to grasp the understanding of all this, because this is where I matured and grew up at, this is where I experienced life. So either I was going to become corrupt or find a way to make this time work for the best and betterment of myself.

As a child you never take the time out to think about what you're doing or make a rational and sound decision if something you do is right or wrong. I didn't! When I would get upset, I acted out. I didn't understand the meaning of self-control, but the more I matured I began to realize what defines a man, because I didn't want to make the same mistakes as a man that I did as a child. So I realized that being a man and unfolding into manhood is first taking responsibility for your actions and being accountable for those actions, second being in control of yourself, and third knowing that I don't know everything and it's okay to say I don't and seek some help from those who know best. No one is responsible for what you do, but your own self. Once I established this principle of action upon myself, then I established my morals and values. Not that I didn't have them before prison, but it's different from being taught without really knowing and understanding why and actually learning why firsthand. The steps I take towards change are steps toward changing all the misconceptions I had as a child in becoming a better man.

Have you remained in continual contact with family or friends since becoming incarcerated?

Yes, I have remained in continuous contact with my family, and some of my friends. But I have lost a lot of friends because my future is uncertain.

What would you do if granted a second chance and released?

First, I would thank God for blessing us, and all those who helped, sacrificed, and fought for all juveniles' fair treatment. Second, I want to work with juveniles and stop them from making the mistakes I made and help them deal with peer pressure and other hurdles that we face and have to cross as children growing up. Third, I wanna become a positive and productive citizen and raise a family.

Accomplishments/Achievements since you've been incarcerated.

I received my G.E.D. in 1998. I started Career & Technical Education on September 18, 2006, and completed the course January 19, 2007 receiving a vocational trade.

Make any statement you'd like (100 words or less, please).

I think people sometimes overlook the fact that we the juvenile lifers were children when we committed our crime(s). Children (youth) who were still developing our mental capacity. Juveniles within these ages are still easily influenced by our environment and the people in our environment, despite the fact of our age. We (juveniles) still are not mature, responsible adults in control of our life or capable to make a rational and conscious decision. Children are incapable of making a sound judgement like most adults do, yet the courts and lawmakers are holding us (juveniles) in the same light and with the same responsibilities and penalty as they would an adult. Children are very impetuous, impressionable and irrational at these ages. This is why children can be manipulated and peer pressured into committing their crime(s), unlike an adult who's responsible and able to distinguish the foolishness of someone who's trying to mislead them.

I know it's nothing I can do to take back the crime I committed, or bring back the life I took. I never thought about the crime I was committing, I only thought about the victim taking my aunt away from me, and living without the most favorite aunt I had and loved. Before May 3, 1994, I had never been in trouble before. I never received any juvenile treatment. Because of my crime I was labeled helpless. Yet how can anyone say a child is helpless without first treating the, and then making an assessment? I made a mistake that cost me my life. Some will say that I'm only remorseful because I got caught, but in all honesty I was remorseful when I seen the victim's mother on tv asking for her baby to come home. I wanted so bad to turn back the hands of time and be able to reunite them. I constantly live with this regret and thought that I took someone's life, and I can never give a

mother back her child. I was just young and didn't think about my actions before I committed them.

To sentence a child to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole is a death sentence to any child who was 14, 15 or 16 years old without receiving the electric chair, lethal injection, or the gas chamber. Life without the possibility of parole is an adult sentence designed for adults, and was never created for a juvenile to serve.

Support these bills (HB 4518, 4594, 4595, 4300) (SB 0173, 0174, 0175, 1076) that give juvenile lifers a Second Chance.