

# Life without Children

by Linda Field, CCWF

I came to prison when Sara was seven. She was too young to understand 25 to life meant she'd grow up without her mother. Her brother and sister, who were 15 and 12, didn't truly understand. Sara's first visit was traumatic. She spent the day begging me to allow her to stay with me. She promised to be good, never leave my room, and never bother the guards. She couldn't understand why I didn't want her. She sobbed, clinging to me when it was time to leave. Her little arms reached out to me over her grandfather's shoulder, her hands rapidly opened and closed, begging me.

I kept telling her I loved her. She was finally out of sight, the dam I had erected broke and I let the flood free. I cried for my children and myself.

I cried for every mother and child who went through this. Why didn't the courts understand? They passed a verdict not only on me but my children. My children were abused by their father, orphaned by me, and abandoned by the judicial court system.

After 13 years of heartache, we now have a governor who doesn't want to hear any circumstances of why a murder was committed. He believes we should rot in prison. While I cannot justify my actions, no one is beating my children anymore.

The state decided family living unit visits were no longer acceptable for lifers, further punishing my children. No longer could we have visits in a little apartment in prison which allowed a pretense of normality. During those visits mothers could rock their children, cook for them, and talk for endless hours. No more can we maintain a thread of parenthood with children or grandchildren. Instead visits are conducted in a visiting room with cameras and guards who look at a mother-child relationship as abnormal. We cannot talk about important things because "Big Brother" is watching. The playroom in visiting has few toys, only foam-type blocks. There are no strollers, no high chairs, no outside toys or activities. The few board games are geared for older children and adults.

Our children deserve better. Punish us but not our children. It is time for the state to re-evaluate their treatment of our children.