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Convicting Children

By Rexanne Mancini

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The conviction of 14-year-old Lionel Tate for first-degree murder and the subsequent life in prison sentence has been all but absent from the media lately. After the Florida court handed down the shocking sentence three weeks ago, it seems the media considers it old news. I am choosing to publish my feelings about this case anyway.

I cannot seem to overcome my strong feelings about this topic. I cannot tolerate the fact that a 6 year-old child was beaten to death yet I cannot accept a 14 year-old boy being sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Where in the world did this sentence come from? This is a child we are talking about and a crime he committed when he was 12 years old!

The crime that brought this case to trial is appalling, yet sentencing a 14-year-old boy life in prison without the possibility of parole is ludicrous. This is not justice, this is cruel and unusual punishment handed down to a child. This is cowardice in its highest form and the jurors who convicted him should be ashamed. How could the state of Florida try this boy as an adult in the first place? He is not an adult nor should he be expected to assume the consciousness of an adult.

I see pictures of Lionel Tate and feel nothing but horror at the fear and uncertainty in his eyes as he looks at his mother, obviously trying to comprehend his situation. Yes, the fear and pain he inflicted on Tiffany Eunick is inexcusable. He should definitely be held accountable for his actions, however, he should be held accountable as the child he was at the time of the incident and still is. His mother should be held even more accountable. She was the adult in charge. Where was she when this little girl received 30 horrendous injuries? In hindsight, it's easy to say it was a huge mistake to leave her son alone with little Tiffany Eunick. But where was her head when she rejected the plea bargain of three years in a juvenile facility and ten years probation that would have been a more realistic sentence for this boy? Granted, Lionel Tate was a troubled child. His life had been littered with problematic behavior for quite a few years before this incident. All the more reason to hold his mother accountable for what clearly has been negligent parenting.

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It might be unfair to blame Lionel's mother for his actions, however, as his parent, she needed to find a way to help her son adapt to society when he was clearly lacking adequate social skills. Tiffany Eunick would most likely be alive today and Lionel Tate a carefree teenager had she taken her parenting role more seriously. Again, hindsight makes it all seem so easy. Parenting is not easy. To raise a responsible citizen, we must be responsible parents. If our children are creating problems, we must take measures to find solutions for them to better cope with the world before they destroy their lives and the lives of innocent victims.

Rexanne Mancini is the mother of two daughters. She maintains an extensive yet informal parenting and family web site, Rexanne.com - <http://www.rexanne.com> –Visit her site for good advice, award-winning Internet holiday pages and some humor to help you cope. Subscribe to her free

newsletter, Rexanne's Web Review, for a monthly dose of Rexanne:
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Your Mission Field At Work

By Kimberly Chastain

One point many Christian Working Moms who have been interviewed have made is that they are a shining light in their work place. Whether or not you can speak openly about your faith at work, your co-workers are watching. Are they seeing Jesus in you? Do they see you handle ethical issues in a different manner than other co-workers? Do they see a peace in you amidst all of the stress of the job? Do they see your priorities are in order? Although, we are to be workers worthy of our hire we are first and foremost followers of Christ. Do your co-workers see you participating in the office gossip or do they see you leaving when those discussions come up? Do your co-workers see you building up or tearing down? Do they see compassion in you that is often woefully missing in this get ahead world we live in?

I know as a Christian Working Mom often it is very difficult to get time alone with God. Are you taking your work struggles to him? Are you asking for his direction in a difficult situation? Are you praying for your co-workers to come to know Him? Are you praying that your co-workers who are Christians to grow in their knowledge of Him?

I hope these questions make you think. They are convicting to me, when I read over them. Just in the last few months, I have been more attuned to God's leading in my therapy sessions. Often I will sense God is leading me in a certain direction that I would not go on my own. When I follow his lead, I often see many changes in my clients that would not happen with just my knowledge. I strongly believe God gives us wisdom and the knowledge to do our jobs. I also believe there are many times we need to ask God for wisdom and direction in the everyday tasks in our jobs. May everything we do glorify God.

My prayer is you will be a shining light in your workplace. "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16

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Kimberly M. Chastain, MS, LMFT is the Christian Working Mom Coach and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist who specializes in helping Christian women make the most of their lives. She is the author of the on-line course, "I Can't Say No" and Pearls of Encouragement for Christian Working Moms, a free e-book. If you suffer from "I Can't Say `No" Syndrome, visit Kimberly's site today for the details on an exciting email course that's sure to set you free!

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