

You know the details of the crime in Nancy Seaman's 2004 high profile case involving the death of her husband, but you likely know little about the person who committed that crime. As you contemplate whether to grant commutation to Nancy Seaman, it is my hope that you will not measure her whole life by the worst act committed on the worst day of her life. Rather, I hope you will base your assessment on the totality of her life and character and will ultimately conclude that Nancy Seaman has the potential to successfully return to society as a law-abiding, productive member of the community, willing and able to atone for her crime in some constructive way.

As you may be aware, the verdict in Nancy Seaman's self-defense case involving the death of her abusive husband has been overturned twice on appellate review, with three judges concluding that the evidence was insufficient to support a finding of premeditation and that she is entitled to relief from the first-degree murder conviction and life sentence. In fact, had she been resentenced as Judge McDonald ordered when he overturned the verdict, she would have been sentenced to 12 years or less, making her already eligible for parole. The prosecutor's appeals of these rulings have denied her this relief from judgment, and commutation now remains her only hope for freedom.

Two psychologists, Dr. Lenore Walker, the foremost authority on Battered Woman Syndrome; and Dr. Nels Thompson, the prison psychologist who specializes in domestic abuse cases, have opined in their support letters that Nancy Seaman is a non-violent person who acted in what she reasonably believed to be lawful self-defense when she killed her husband and she would pose no threat of violence to the community if released. Had Michigan law not prohibited Nancy Seaman's expert witness from explaining to the jury how 31 years of long-term abuse affected her behaviors, state of mind, and perception of imminent danger, the outcome of this case would have been far different, according to trial Judge John McDonald.

Nancy Seaman has never used the 31 years of abuse in her marriage as an excuse for her actions which took her husband's life. Instead, she has accepted full responsibility for those actions, acknowledged that better choices on her part could have averted this tragedy, and has expressed extreme remorse for the pain and suffering she has caused to those who loved her husband.

Although a person's circumstances in life change, a person's true character does not. Nancy Seaman was a devoted wife, loving mother, dedicated teacher, and law-abiding, productive member of society before this crime was committed and she continues to exhibit those same admirable qualities despite her incarceration. Nancy did not become embittered when the prosecutor's appeals resulted in reversal of the relief from judgment that two courts ruled was appropriate. Instead, she rose above adversity by remaining misconduct free during her 13 years of incarceration and used her time productively for self-improvement and in service to others. Nancy remained fully employed throughout her incarceration, using her professional and personal talents as a GED tutor and Law Library Clerk to help other prisoners better themselves, and she continues to work to change Michigan law which denies battered women a complete defense.

Nancy Seaman has participated in every available prison program about domestic violence as well as group and individual therapy sessions with a prison psychologist to gain insights about her behaviors that led to her husband's death. Despite her life sentence, Nancy has remained optimistic and has taken the initiative to prepare a Relapse Prevention Plan outlining how she plans to successfully reintegrate into society and avoid future risky situations by establishing a support network of family, friends, and advocacy organizations. Nancy has a stable home environment with her brother and sister-in-law awaiting her upon release from prison. She is in good health, takes no medications, possesses marketable job skills, and has substantial community support for commutation.

Throughout her life, Nancy Seaman has served her community as teacher, Cub Scout den mother, team mother for her husband's youth baseball teams, and fund raiser. She was frequently in attendance at the extra-curricular activities of her students to support their endeavors. Nancy Seaman was nominated for district "Teacher of the Year" and received an award from Governor Jennifer Granholm for her excellence in promoting and encouraging cultural diversity in the classroom. She served as Chair of the School Improvement Team and was an active participant on both the District Assessment and Language Arts Reading/Writing Committees, and participated in hundreds of hours of staff development workshops to improve her overall teaching techniques. As Valedictorian of her high school class with a Master's Degree in Elementary Education from Eastern Michigan



University, Nancy has embraced the love of life-long learning and nurtured it in both her own children and in her students. Nancy's Master's thesis on Non-Violent Conflict Resolution in the Classroom was the cornerstone of her teaching philosophy and improved the overall learning experiences for the students at Longacre Elementary. Prior to her teaching career, Nancy worked as an administrative assistant at both Ford Motor Company and BASF. She possesses many talents and marketable skills that will ensure her success in the workforce upon her release from prison and will provide the community with the benefits and fruits of her talents and labors.

It is not my intent to minimize the seriousness of Nancy Seaman's crime, but to provide a context to reassure the Parole Board that Nancy Seaman is not an incorrigible criminal. A grant of commutation at this time for a first-time offender like Nancy Seaman with no prior history of assaultive behavior is justified. Nancy Seaman has proven herself as someone able and willing to contribute to society in a meaningful way. At 65 years old, her goal is to reunite with her family, continue her work to bring public awareness to the plight of battered women in society, work to change Michigan law which significantly impedes a battered woman's right to a defense, and to educate youth about the scourge of domestic violence and the consequences of making poor choices that break the law.

There is precedence for the commutation of a non-parolable life sentence as evidenced by Governor Grahm's commutation of the life sentences of Kay Thomas, Delores Washington, and Linda Hamilton. If given a chance for freedom, Nancy Seaman, could also become one of the Parole Board's success stories. Please recommend her for a grant of commutation.