

Good afternoon, my name is Marty Price. It is quite an honor to be asked to share with the commission my personal experiences on such a delicate and sensitive topic. Hopefully, after sharing my testimony with you, it will provide an insight to give you a better understanding of the seismic effect that your recommendations entail. Although, there are many views and perspectives concerning a Capital Punishment decision, I applaud Governor O'Malley and this commission for their openness and consideration of all viewpoints on the many issues involving Capital Punishment. I know my father as a violent and abusive man...an alcoholic...a man who had violent episodes that could put fear into anyone who crossed his path. I can painfully remember every single violent act he inflicted upon me and on others.

In April of 1974, I was a 12 year old Little Leaguer. My baseball game had been canceled due to rain. I was watching a groundhog wander its way through a field behind our house, when all of a sudden, my father appeared with a rifle and began shooting at the groundhog. His eyes were glazed with a disdainful hatred. He reloaded his gun, turned and walked away. Moments later, my mother ran out the back door and screamed, "Marty come on!"

We ran about 100 yards into a field and fell to the ground lying motionless. With my face to the ground and my body trembling in the wet grass and mud, I heard the back door open. Seconds later, a flash of light lit up the sky. The flash was followed by a loud crack and a simultaneous rattle of the tree branches dangling just over my head. My father was shooting at my mother and me. There were several more shots before my mother and I took fate into our hands and we ran through the field to safety. I could hear my father yelling, "If you tell anyone, I will kill you both!" We found refuge at our neighbor's house that evening. My father didn't kill my mother and I on that raining evening in 1974, however; 14 years later, my father's rage led to a different outcome. July 27, 1988. I was 23, married with two young daughters. My father arrived at my house and stated ... "I killed your stepsister and stepmother." I said, "With what?" "That ole 22 your uncle left me." My mind flashed-back to 1974. I drove my father to the police station and gave a statement to the police. Then, I drove to my father's, to identify the bodies.

I approached my father's house and it was a scene, right out of a movie. Lights were flashing throughout the darkness of the sky from fire trucks, police cars, and an ambulance. Attached to the trees and the corner of the house, yellow-tape cornered off the property. There were at least 80 to 100 onlookers and a dark blue van was backed-up to the front of the house. Once inside, I was asked to go upstairs to the bedroom on the left. The memory of that bedroom is something I will never forget. I remember staring at them both in disbelief, shock and sadness. I didn't want to believe that my father had followed through on one of his death threats. I was certain my mother and I would be his victims.

On the following day, my daughters were playing in the backyard. The phone rang and in a deep male voice, I heard these words, "We are going to kill you and your family." Now, my daughters and my wife were in danger for something my father did.

It was now February of 1989 and I was called to the witness stand to testify. While my father and I did not have the typical father-son relationship, I was overcome with feelings of guilt. It was hitting me; my testimony would be used to convict my own father. I endured two hours of questioning. The courtroom experience twisted the emotions I had for my father even more. Confused and scared, I walked alone directly to my church. I went inside and knelt at the altar.

I prayed for forgiveness. It was a forgiveness I never thought I would have to ask for. I felt I had betrayed my father. Just then the church porter came in the back door. He sat on the steps beside me and said he was sorry to hear what had happened. I looked at him and asked the same question everyone was asking, "Why? Why did this happen?" His response was, "Marty, we don't know why, but some day you will."

Flash forward to December 19, 2007. Twenty-four years ago, my mother remarried and a new blended-family was formed. My mother married a quiet and gentle man. My mother was safe and happy, but violence has now found its way into this family, too. My sister who lives in Mississippi, left me a message during the night. I heard her words, "Marty, our nephew is dead!" Our nephew was a young 25 year old police officer in a small remote town in Western Maryland.

After responding to a call, he was killed in the line of duty. His death made an impact that touched hearts across the country. With more than 2,000 people in attendance, my nephew's memorial service had to be held in the gymnasium of the high school he attended. There were local and state dignitaries, including our honorable Governor, Martin O'Malley.

As I walked out of the gym into the sea of people waiting outside, I could feel the raw emotion which filled the air. Complete strangers grieving for my family and offering a look of "I am so sorry." As I walked to our awaiting vehicle, I noticed my youngest daughter. I immediately saw that innocent look of hers, the same look when I came home each day from my father's trial, 20 years ago. The next thing I knew, that wave of grief and guilt was overwhelming me again. I was experiencing and feeling the same pain my father had inflicted on my stepmother and stepsisters family. The pain is one I cannot describe. The emotion is so deep, it physically hurts. Being the son of a convicted murderer, the pain is a hopeless, embarrassed, what-can-I do feeling. Having a family members murdered, leaves you a feeling of remorse, deep sadness and the question, "how can I help ease the pain for my family?"

It is now August of 2008. I still struggle with confusion over my love and loyalty to an abusive and often dangerous father. How does one break the cycle of violence? For me, the power of education and years of counseling, has given me the framework to transform myself from what I was conditioned to be. As we're all aware, and I have now shared

with you, every situation is different. There were times when I felt like I, myself, could have injected the man who killed my stepmother and 16 year-old stepsister. But that man is my father. I was 23 years old when my father committed his heinous act of violence and it initially left me with many questions of why. But, I can also attest that my father's violence is directly related to the inner strength which has continued to develop in me across the years. As strange as it sounds, his anger taught me perseverance; his lack of self-control taught me the value of self discipline; his alcoholism taught me to take care of and respect my body; and, his hatred taught me to love.

The suspect who murdered my nephew has two children, one of which is a nine year-old boy. That nine year old little boy is facing the very same questions I faced as a 23 year-old man. I cannot begin to imagine how difficult this is for him at his age knowing the difficulty I faced at 23. In closing, I urge you the committee, to consider all statistics and analysis, testimonies and most importantly, your own gut feeling to provide fair and impartial recommendations on Capital Punishment for the citizens of the State of Maryland. Thank you.