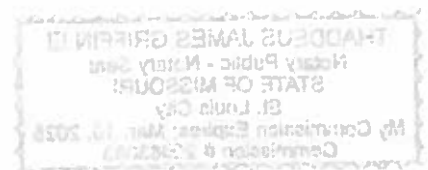


**AFFIDAVIT OF LINDA DICKERSON-BELL**

1. My name is Linda Dickerson-Bell. I live in Bonne Terre, Missouri.
2. I am the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity in St. Francois, County. Before this position, I worked for the East Missouri Action Agency for 18 years.
3. In 2002, I served on the jury that convicted Michael Politte for the crime of killing his mother.
4. I have always had doubts about Michael's guilt and serious concerns that we made a mistake. At the time, I voted guilty because I was pressured by some of the other jurors to do so and because, while I had a lot of doubt, I did not feel Michael's attorney gave us anything to work with.
5. If I had known then what I know now, I would not have convicted.
6. I now believe Michael is innocent.
7. After I saw on Facebook that attorneys had filed a petition in court for Michael Politte, I sent the MacArthur Justice Center a direct message on August 31, 2021. I wrote " I served as a juror 23 years ago on the Michael Politte case. What can I do to help make this right?"
8. I saw the MTV show about this case a few years ago. I hesitated about whether or not to watch the show but I ultimately watched because this case had weighed on me so heavily since our verdict, and I wanted to know if the show would provide any information that could finally put my mind at peace about our verdict.
9. I learned from the MTV show that there was not gasoline on Michael's shoes, as we were told at trial.
10. At trial, the gasoline on Michael's shoes was the nail in the coffin for me. It is the reason I voted guilty. If I had known there was not gasoline on his shoes, I would have voted to acquit.

11. I do not understand why we did not hear any of the evidence about other possible suspects. We did not hear about the victim's recent divorce or the ex-husband's history of domestic violence. We also did not hear anything about the man seen walking from the area of the victim's home the morning of the fire. This evidence would have made a difference to me.
12. I do not believe I would have voted guilty if I would have known about the other possible suspects.
13. As the evidence stood at trial, the gasoline was the whole case to me. I do not recall the prosecutor really presenting any theory or evidence of a motive. And I did not believe that Michael actually confessed to this crime, or if he did, that it was true.
14. My father was a police chief and I know that law enforcement are people just like you and me. I also know that sometimes law enforcement do things they should not do to get a conviction. So I questioned the legitimacy of the confession and did not find it credible or compelling enough to convict on that basis.
15. Michael did not get a defense at trial. His attorney came in every day looking very tired and he was never prepared. He seemed like he was in over his head.
16. I had a lot of doubts about Michael's guilt even back then, but his defense attorney did not give us anything to work with. I kept waiting for him to give us something, and he never did. I do not remember the defense putting on evidence or explaining why the prosecution's evidence did not mean anything.
17. I also do not recall the defense attorney speaking to us about what reasonable doubt means or does not mean, and I felt none of us actually understood the meaning of reasonable doubt. I recently was called for jury duty and, during jury selection, the defense attorney educated us about the meaning of reasonable doubt and that the burden is on the state. I do not recall Michael's defense attorney doing anything like this at his trial.

18. In particular, I was waiting for someone from Michael's family to testify. They were with Michael in court every day supporting him so I assumed we would hear from them. I never met them so I do not know who was who, but I assumed they were family because they were always sitting right behind him and they cried when he was convicted. When we did not hear from them, it left me with questions. While I had doubts, I questioned my instincts because I thought if he did not do this, his family would have testified in his defense.
19. While I call Michael by his proper name now, back then I thought of him as "Burny" and so did the other jurors. We thought of him by that name because that is what everyone called him throughout the trial. I now understand that this nickname was actually spelled Bernie and came from Michael's middle name. But, at trial, I assumed Michael was nicknamed Burny because the prosecutor told us repeatedly that he really liked to burn things.
20. I felt pressured by a couple of the other jurors to vote for guilt. I particularly recall an elderly male juror, who may have been the foreman. He was dead set that Michael was guilty from day one. I recall him saying something like he was going to hang the kid (Michael), and he did.
21. I was young, only 30 years old at the time, and impressionable. The elderly man juror and an elderly woman juror were extremely aggressive and hostile towards me. I recall the man slamming his hand down on the table when he was angry that I had doubts about Michael's guilt. It startled me and left an impression on me to this day. They called me stupid for having doubts and believing someone else may have done this. They said things like "Don't be stupid. He's guilty. Let's get out of here."
22. I know there were other jurors in that room during deliberations, but when I look back on it, all I can see is that elderly man and elderly woman. They dominate my recollection of the deliberations.



23. I felt that we were very rushed in our deliberations. Everyone's attitude seemed to be let's get this done and get home. I also had a child and was worried about who was picking her up that evening, so I admit I was also feeling some pressure to get out of there. Everyone just wanted to go home.
24. My vote to convict Michael has weighed heavily on me. I felt it was wrong even at the time. As they polled the jury in court, I recall thinking this is wrong but I felt I could not back out at that point. I cried when our verdict was read in court. After learning about the new evidence, my guilt has only grown. I now firmly believe Michael is innocent and that we made a terrible mistake.
25. I am submitting this declaration because I believe the justice system failed Michael, and I think we (the jury) failed Michael. I want to do what I can to right this wrong.

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT

10-5-2021  
Date

Linda Dickerson-Bell  
Linda Dickerson-Bell

Subscribed and sworn before me, a notary public, in and for the State of Missouri this 5 day of October, 2021.

Name: Thaddeus J. Griffin III  
Notary Public

My commission expires: 3/10/2025

