

What Happened to a Second Chance for Bobby Bostic

We all know that kids are not perfect. In fact, they are constantly making mistakes late into their adolescent years as they try to find their identity. There are some kids who succumb to crime that is ever present in their crime prone neighborhoods. Bobby Bostic is one such kid. At 16 years old he committed a terrible crime. On December 12, 1995 there were five people who were on a charity mission to poverty stricken children in the poor neighborhood where he lived. Bobby and an older friend did not know why these unknown people were in the vicinity of this neighborhood. Nevertheless, he and his friend decided to rob these people.

During the course of this robbery two males were shot but not seriously injured. Neither victim required medical attention. They walked away from the crime scene and went to work the next day. Bobby and his friend only robbed the two males in the crowd. They attempted to rob the three females but did not get anything from them. Under Missouri law, Bobby Bostic was charged with fourteen felony counts (2 first degree robbery, 2 first degree assaults, 3 attempted robbery, 7 counts of armed criminal action). Approximately 45 minutes later and 8 city blocks away, Bobby and his friend robbed another victim who was outside her car gathering gifts she was giving to a needy family. Not knowing what she was doing, Bobby and his friend robbed her at gunpoint. They put her back into her vehicle and drove her around demanding money. Thereafter, they released her and took her vehicle. They were arrested while driving her vehicle. Bobby was charged with 3 more felonies from this incident (first degree robbery, kidnapping and armed criminal action). He also had marijuana on him, another felony.

In January, 1997, Bobby was ready to stand trial. Already the state had offered him a plea bargain of life with the possibility of parole. Right before his trial he was offered an open plea bargain which means the defendant just pleads guilty at the mercy of the court with no promises, leaving his fate in the hands of the judge to sentence him to the maximum or the minimum. The absolute minimum in this case would have been 10 years with all sentences running concurrently. The maximum would have been 13 life sentences plus 30 years.

Not really understanding the serious trouble Bobby was in, Bobby chose to go to a jury trial where he was found guilty on all charges. The jury recommended 30 years each for the robberies, 15 years for the kidnapping, 15 years each for the shots fired assault charges, and 5 years to 15 years for the 8 armed criminal action charges. In addition, Bobby was given another year for the marijuana possession charge.

It was left up to the judge to run these sentences concurrent into a 30 year sentence or to run the sentences consecutively. The judge decided that Bobby deserved to pay the ultimate price for his crimes. She ordered all the sentences to be served consecutive to one another. She knew that by doing this she was sentencing him to die in prison. Take a moment to reflect on this. No one was seriously injured in this crime. There was no rape. Yet the judge decided to sentence Bobby to die in prison. To sum it all up, she pronounced the following at the conclusion of the sentencing

hearing: “You made your choice and you’re going to have live with your choice, and you’re going to die with your choice because Bobby Bostic you will die in the Department of Corrections. Do you understand that? You don’t go see the parole board until the year 2201. Nobody in this courtroom will be alive in 2201.”

Dam! How can a 16 year old be sentenced to 241 years in a crime where no one was seriously injured? This can’t be justice. This can’t be justified. Okay, Bobby deserves to be punished for what he did. But the question is: should he have to die in prison? Apparently, this is what the judge felt. Furthermore the state of Missouri still feels this way today over twenty something years later even when the United States Supreme Court declared in 2016 that all juveniles who committed murder should not be condemned to die in prison. Where does this leave Bobby? He is still stuck with 241 years.

America is a country of second chances. This country forgives its disgraced politicians who have been convicted of crimes. They even get elected into office again after serving their sentences. Murderers and rapists and child molesters all get second chances but not Bobby Bostic. Why not? Why can’t this child get a second chance? Last but not least why didn’t the judge take the element of rehabilitation into consideration when she sentenced young Bobby? Despite him never being able to be released from prison ‘Bobby decided to rehabilitate himself anyway. He has gained his G.E.D. and an Associate of Arts college degree. He got a paralegal Diploma as well as a Business Studies certificate from Missouri State University. He has gotten over 40 rehabilitation self improvement class certificates from the Department of Corrections and outside organizations. In addition to this, he has written 6 nonfiction books and 9 poetry books in addition to founding a bookclub called “Rehabilitated Men Read” among numerous other things.

It is worth repeating that America is a country of second chances. Missouri is a state in America. Why does Missouri not give Bobby Bostic a second chance?