

## OKLAHOMA JUSTICE IN 2001



When Velma Barfield was executed in North Carolina in 1984, it was the first female execution since 1962. It would be another fourteen years before Karla Faye Tucker was executed in Texas. But Oklahoma would make their own infamous claim to fame when they put three women – Wanda Jean Allen, Marilyn Plantz and Lois Nadean Smith – to death in 2001.

**Wanda Allen** and Gloria Leathers met in prison where Allen was serving a manslaughter sentence for the 1981 shooting of her childhood friend. Later, they lived together on and off for three years. On December 1, 1988, they got into a fight and Leathers called her mother to help her move out. They drove to The Villages police station to file a complaint against Allen. As Leathers exited her car, Allen walked up and stuck a gun in Leathers' ribs and shot her. Leathers died five days later and Allen was charged with first-degree murder.

Jurors rejected Allen's claim of self-defense, when they learned of the 1981 killing, and took only two hours to sentence Allen to death. Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson protested her execution based on her serious mental disabilities. She was executed in January 2001, the first woman executed by the state of Oklahoma since 1903 and the first black woman executed in America since 1954.

On August 26, 1988, as Jim Plantz returned from his night job at 4am, he was ambushed by William Bryson and Clinton McKimble with his six-year-old's baseball bats, while his young children slept in a nearby room. **Marilyn Plantz**, who was waiting in her bedroom, plotted with her young lover Bryson and his accomplice to collect on her husband's \$300,000 life insurance policy.

Bryson drove Plantz in his truck to a remote road. McKimble followed in a car. They placed Plantz behind the wheel and McKimble stuffed a rag in the gas tank and lit it. The pickup failed to explode so Bryson set Plantz on fire. As they drove away, McKimble saw Plantz raise up in the seat while flames shot out from the vehicle. Bryson was executed in June 2000 before Plantz was executed in May 2001.

**Lois "Mean Nadean" Smith** would do anything for her eighteen-year-old son Gregory. On July 4, 1982, mother, son and his new girlfriend Theresa confronted ex-girlfriend Cindy at her motel. Agreeing to take a ride with them, Nadean interrogated her in the backseat of their car over rumors she had tried to arrange for Greg to be killed and reveal his drug dealing to police. Nadean choked Cindy and stabbed her in the throat, before taking her to Greg's father's house.

There, Nadean forced her into a chair, repeatedly threatening to shoot her. Cindy used a pillow to try to protect herself but Nadean shot her several times. Greg reloaded the gun to help his mother fire the fatal shot. When Theresa confessed everything, Nadean was sent to death row and Greg was sentenced to serve a life sentence. Smith was executed in December 2001.

Oklahoma officials did not consider their actions unusual since all three women had exhausted their appeals. Statistics tell a different story. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, no state has executed as many women in one year since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976.

Although women commit 10% of the homicides, they represent only 1.2% of the people on death row. It is important to remember that Oklahoma is ranked number one in the nation for the number of women incarcerated on a per-capita basis.