

Aileen Wuornos: life in hitchhiking across america that turn her life around essa...

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



Born on February 29, 1956, Aileen Wuornos' life began as tragically as it ended. Her biological mother, Diane Wuornos, was a teenager at the time of Aileen's birth and her biological father, Leo Dale Pittman, was considered to be a schizophrenic and was a convicted child molester. Luckily, Aileen never knew her father as he was already in prison by the time she was born, but this does not diminish the fact that she had his genes. Aileen also had an older brother, Keith. Shortly before Aileen turned four years old, her mother abandoned her and her brother (Aileen Wuornos, wikipedia. com, 2012). Therefore, Aileen did not have a significant relationship with her biological mother or father.

Aileen's maternal grandparents, Lauri and Britta Wuornos, legally adopted the children and raised them as their own. Unfortunately, this family dynamic was no better for Aileen. Aileen's grandfather, Lauri, was both physically and sexually abusive, while her grandmother, Britta, was an alcoholic. She was in another family that had a significant emotional toll. By age 11, Aileen was sexually active. Much of her sexual activities were in exchange for items such as cigarettes, drugs, and food. Aileen also claimed that she engaged in sexual activity with her brother at a young age. It was about this time that Aileen learned that Lauri and Britta were actually her maternal grandparents, furthering the confusion and emotional distress. At age 14, Aileen became pregnant; allegedly by a friend of her grandfather (although Aileen claimed her brother was the father). The child was given up for adoption. Shortly after the birth of her baby, Aileen dropped out of school and her grandmother, Britta, died of liver failure. Soon after, Aileen's

grandfather kicked her out of the house (Aileen Wuornos, wikipedia. com, 2012).

After being abandoned yet again, Aileen began her life of crime. First, she turned to prostitution and lived in the woods near her home. She then spent the next four years hitchhiking across America as she continued to work as a prostitute. Her first arrest occurred in 1974 in Jefferson County, Colorado for drunk driving, disorderly conduct, and firing a weapon from a car. Her next arrest was in Michigan two years later after she assaulted a bartender (Aileen Wuornos, biography. com, 2012).

In 1976, Aileen had the opportunity to turn her life around. While hitchhiking in Florida, she met a wealthy yacht club owner, Lewis Fell, and he fell in love with her. They were married after a short courtship. The wedding was even written up in the local society pages. However, Aileen soon returned to her criminal ways. She began fighting in bars and was soon jailed for assault again as a result. Fell was embarrassed by her behavior and had the marriage annulled (Aileen Wuornos, wikipedia. com, 2012).

In the same year as her marriage and annulment, Aileen's brother Keith died of throat cancer. She quickly wasted the \$10, 000 life insurance check she received from Keith's death and spent the next ten years continuing her life of crime; including theft, forgery, and continued prostitution.

In 1986, Aileen met Tyria Moore in a Daytona gay bar. The women began a relationship and Aileen quickly pulled Moore into her volatile lifestyle. The relationship lasted for four years, during the time that Aileen began to

murder her johns. Moore eventually would be used by police to help convict Aileen of the murder of seven men in 1989 and 1990.

The first man that Aileen murdered was Richard Mallory. Mallory was a convicted rapist and Aileen claimed to have murdered him in self defense. Her remaining victims were David Spears, Charles Carskaddon, Peter Siems (whose body was never found), Troy Burrell, Charles Humphreys, and Walter Jeno Antonio. All of the men, with the exception of Siems, were found with multiple gunshots (The case of Aileen Wuornos, 2012).

There is no doubt that Aileen's life was one of emotional and physical stress and abuse. Many of these factors could have led her to her life of crime and the following theories help to explain how. Agnew's General Strain Theory

Agnew's General Strain Theory states there are three types of strains on an individual that might cause them to turn to criminal activity. All strain theories take the approach that a person would not normally commit a crime but because of outside circumstances is pulled into a life of crime. Strain theories also suggest that most people are lawful individuals but because of the strain put on us by society we encounter obstacles that prevent us from fulfilling this wish (Miller, Schreck, & Tewksbury, 2011). The three types of strains are as follows: Failure to achieve positively valued goals

Aileen's life was an extremely rough one. There was not much in the way of positive valued goals in her life but one major part could have possibly changed her life forever. This was the birth of her child. Motherhood changes a person's values and beliefs. A child can turn a selfish person into one that

is selfless and considerate of the innocent baby brought into society. Since Aileen was unable to hold onto her baby that it was removed from her at such an early age the strain on Aileen's beliefs were unable to be changed for the better with the burden of motherhood. If she was able to keep the baby Aileen might have never turned to a life of crime.

Another goal for most people to strive for in life is one of marriage. Aileen was never able to successfully find someone that could help her for the better. Her only attempt at marriage was with Lewis Fell, but by the time Fell came into her life Aileen was already too far past the point of change.

Something positively valued is removed from us

Aileen had very little in the way of positive events in her life. Home for most of us is something we cherish. We all have fond memories as a child playing in the backyard with friends and possibly siblings. This was also the case with Aileen. Though her childhood was not the best, one can assume that she still had childhood memories that were pleasant in her eyes. Once her grandmother died and her grandfather had both Aileen and Keith taken away to live in foster homes Aileen lost the one thing that was a rock in her world, her home. Stimuli that we find noxious

Aileen was living on her own since she was a teenager because she was kicked out of her home. She turned to the life of crime as the only way to survive. Aileen turned to a life of a prostitute at a very early age. Because Aileen was sexually abused as a child she viewed sex as something she

hated. It was an act of pain and suffering, something she had to deal with at a young age.

Because of the nature of prostitution and the people that deal with prostitutes this only brought the immoral people into Aileen's daily life. This would only fuel the fire in Aileen's personality to distrust men and eventually lead to the murders of seven men. The nature of the killings shows the hatred Aileen had toward men in general. Killing someone is always a violent act but killing someone with a single gunshot is drastically different than the anger it takes to shoot someone six times. This uncontrolled anger shows that Aileen's distrust for men started at an early age because of the abuse she dealt with from her grandfather and brother and only worsened as the years progressed.

All the killings showed signs of raging homicide. Richard Mallory, Aileen's first victim, was shot three times in the chest; David Spears was shot six times in the chest; Charles Carkaddon was shot nine times in the chest; Troy Burrell was shot twice in the chest; Charles Humphreys was shot several times in the chest and head; and Walter Antonio was shot four times in the back and head. This also shows that she had such hatred toward men that even though Walter was not facing her she had no problems at all killing him. Peter Sims is the only victim where the details are unknown because the body was never found. One can only assume because of the previous manner at which the other victims were killed that Peter also was shot multiple times with no remorse from his killer. Social Learning Theory

In social learning theory, negative outcomes are related to life experiences, such as childhood exposure to domestic violence, sex abuse, recurring conflict with the juvenile and criminal justice system, school failure, poverty, and poor role models. The learning perspective suggests that violent crime, for example, is a rather natural response resulting from observation of adult role models' use of aggression to solve problems. Some youth not only become familiar with domestic violence through firsthand observation but also come to accept it as normal behavior. (Miller, Schreck, & Tewksbury, 2011)

Aileen is a classic case of the problems a person faces and how social learning theory can be attributed to Aileen. At a very early age Aileen had to deal with sexual abuse from her grandfather and brother. Her lifestyle was one that only fuels deviant activities. Her grandmother was a drunk and also very abusive toward Aileen. She learned at a very early age that petty crimes were an easy way to make money and violence was no stranger to her life either. Both her grandparents were abusive toward her. This showed Aileen that violence was a way of life. If you wanted something or if someone was threatening or even bothering you violence was your only option. She was arrested several times in her late teens and early 20s for various crimes including drunk driving, disorderly conduct, assault and disturbing the peace. These arrests had little to no effect on Aileen and her desire to live a life on the move. Without a good role model in Aileen's life it was easy to see how she was led down the life of a criminal and finally a serial killer; grandparents that were either drunk or abusing her, a mother that

abandoned her, and father that was never in her life. All these examples of role models that should have been her role model as a child were negligent in their duties and instead fueled Aileen toward a life of crime. Hirschi's Social Control Theory

Hirschi theorized there are four elements of a person's bond to society. This theory does not say that a person must have all four elements to become a criminal more so if one displays these traits he/she would be more inclined to crime because they are under socialized into conformity (Miller, Schreck, & Tewksbury, 2011). Attachment

Attachment is the connection we have with others, friends and family. If a person has a strong attachment with their family then they would refrain from activities that might bring about shame or embarrassment to their friends and family (Miller, Schreck, & Tewksbury, 2011).

In Aileen's case she had very little attachment to anyone in her family. Her mother abandoned her at the age of 4 to the care of Aileen's grandparents. Her father was completely absent from her life, being in jail for most of her life when Aileen's parents were together. He was not a very good man, being a child molester and psychopath himself. Aileen's bond with her grandparents, which she thought were her parents until she was 12, was no better when it came to having any attachment with Aileen. Lauri Wuornos, her grandfather, by her accounts was sexually and physically abusive to both Aileen and Keith while in his care. That only left her grandmother, Britta Wuornos, and Britta was an abusive alcoholic.

As one can see there was no need for Aileen to have any attachments or reservations about bringing shame to her loved one (if you could call them that). She only knew one lifestyle and that was one of an abusive and violent nature. Commitment

Commitment deals with what people care about us and the consequences involved if a person would be caught doing a crime. Commitment deals with the loss of reputation to one's values and the outcome of less than moral activities (Miller, Schreck, & Tewksbury, 2011).

Aileen seemed to have cared for only two things in her life - how she was going to live day to day and making a living on the road. There were few options, all of which meant breaking the law. Aileen seemed to have no problems with this. Aileen learned at an early age that she could use her body to make money. Aileen did not care what reputation she would have by living the life of a prostitute.

The other thing that Aileen cared for was Tyria Moore. Tyria and Aileen had a chaotic love affair that lasted four years. Tyria and Aileen had no problems robbing Aileen's customers of their money and valuables. However, Tyria finally got suspicious of Aileen's actions and left her. Prosecutors actually used this affection toward Tyria as strategy against Aileen to get her to confess to the killings. Involvement

Involvement in this context deals with an individual's ties to community and what he/she does with their free time. A person that is highly active and

tends to be always busy will have less time to commit a crime because of the time involved in personal activities (Miller, Schreck, & Tewksbury, 2011).

This element of Hirschi's social control theory is easy to attach when it comes to Aileen. She was unemployed and living on the road. Free time was all that Aileen had. Aileen had no ties to her home or society. She lived in the world roaming from place to place wherever the money she made from prostitution would take her. Belief

Belief is a person's thought that crime is wrong. If a person has a strong belief that crime is wrong then they will stray from those activities (Miller, Schreck, & Tewksbury, 2011).

Aileen's belief of crime was something that is skewed by her upbringing. Because she was abused as a child, many times physically, she might not even have understood that violence is not a way of life. To Aileen, violence was an everyday activity. In order to achieve your point in a situation violence was not only your only option, it was your right to stand up for yourself and take what you desired. Summary

In summation, Aileen Wuornos seemed to be a lost cause from the very beginning. Without a proper home or positive role models in her life and through the course of socially learning that crime was the only way to live. It was not long before petty crime escalated to the brutal killing of seven men.

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