

November 11, 2020

Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

As over 800 organizations, scholars, individuals, law clinics, and survivors who are dedicated to ending all forms of violence against women, we are painfully aware of the victimization histories of most incarcerated women. Studies consistently show that up to 95% of incarcerated women have been victims of physical or sexual abuse. Lisa Montgomery's story is a shocking example of what the research only begins to describe. Lisa suffered a life-time of horrific abuses, was consistently failed by people and systems that should have helped her, and became severely mentally ill by the time she committed her crime. Lisa committed her terrible crime – the seriousness of which we do not minimize – in the wake of a lifetime of victimization and mental illness. We urge you to have mercy and to commute her death sentence to life without the possibility of parole.

Lisa Montgomery was born with permanent brain damage as a result of her mother's alcohol intake during pregnancy. Sexually abused by her stepfather for the first time at eleven years old, Lisa was repeatedly raped for years. Lisa's mother beat her children brutally and emotionally tortured them, once killing the family dog in front of them. Lisa's mother also trafficked Lisa to men for sex beginning when Lisa was in her early teens. Lisa developed dissociative disorder and complex post traumatic stress disorder as a result of the repeated anal, oral, and vaginal rapes she suffered by the men to whom her mother trafficked her. Lisa told people about her abuse, but no one intervened. School administrators knew that Lisa came to school dirty, in tattered clothes, but failed to investigate or report. At age eighteen, Lisa, at her mother's behest, married her stepbrother, who also raped and beat her. She had four children, then was sterilized against her will—another form of violence. Her mental health continued to spiral downwards. When her ex-husband/stepbrother filed for custody of two of her children and said he would reveal her sterilization to her new husband (who believed her to be pregnant), Lisa's history of victimization, trauma, and mental illness tipped over the edge. Threatened with the loss of the children she deeply loved, Lisa committed a horrific crime.

Prosecutors in Lisa's trial dismissed her repeated violent victimization as an "abuse excuse." Lisa's abuse doesn't excuse her crime. But it does provide an explanation for how she came to commit that crime, a context for trying to understand what otherwise might seem incomprehensible. A victim of trauma with serious mental health issues, including dissociative disorder directly linked to her experiences of sexual violence, Lisa's mental illness is inextricable from the crime she committed.

Moreover, prosecutors in Lisa's case deployed gendered stereotypes to discredit Lisa's stories of victimization. They presented Lisa as a bad mother who didn't cook or clean and kept a filthy home. The failure to appear as a perfect model of womanhood—pretty, clean, docile, obedient, and well mannered—is often used to undermine the credibility of victims of violence. Few women can live up to this image of the sanitized victim. Lisa certainly didn't, and as a result, her history of victimization was dismissed and minimized, instead of providing the crucial context for understanding her crime.

Those of us who work in the anti-violence field or have experienced abuse know that victims of violence are complex, that someone can both use even horrific violence and nonetheless be a victim of serious trauma. Lisa suffered horrific physical and sexual abuse and serious trauma throughout her life, struggled with mental illness, and was a victim long before she became a defendant. While her experiences of victimization and mental illness do not excuse her crime, they do help to explain what otherwise seems unimaginable. Lisa has experienced a life-time of punishment and it is now time for mercy. We respectfully urge you to commute Lisa Montgomery's death sentence.

Thank you for your serious consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

Battered Women's Justice Project (Minneapolis, MN)
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities (St. Paul, MN)
Center for Gender & Justice (La Jolla, California)
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues (Washington, DC)
Equal Justice USA (Brooklyn, NY)
Global Justice Center (New York, NY)
Kaity's Way (Phoenix, AZ)
Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund (New York, NY)
Lovelace Consulting Services, Inc. (Silver Spring, Maryland)
Media Equity (Las Cruces, NM)
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (Washington, DC)
National Association of Social Workers (Washington, DC)
National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (Austin, Texas)
National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women (Philadelphia, PA)
National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (Madison, WI)
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Denver, CO)
National Domestic Violence Hotline (Austin, TX)
National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (Lame Deer, MT)
National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (Windsor, CT)
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (Harrisburg, PA)
Our Bodies Ourselves (Newton, MA)
Red Wind Consulting, Inc. (Colorado Springs, CO)
StrongHearts Native Helpline (Minneapolis, MN)
Sugati Publications (Oxford, OH)
Ujima Inc. The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community (Washington, DC)

Statewide Organizations

Amani Community Services (Waterloo, IA)
Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (Phoenix, AZ)
Arkansas Coalition Against Sexual Assault (Little Rock, AR)
AZNOW PAC (Phoenix, AZ)
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (Sacramento, CA)
Diverse & Resilient (Milwaukee, WI)
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Atlanta, GA)
Idaho Coalition Against Sexual And Domestic Violence (Boise, ID)

Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Springfield, IL)
 Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc. (Indianapolis, IN)
 Indiana Catholic Conference (Indianapolis, IN)
 Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Des Moines, IA)
 Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault (Des Moines, IA)
 Jane Doe Inc. (Boston, MA)
 Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs (Frankfort, KY)
 Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Frankfort, KY)
 LA REPEAL (New Orleans, LA)
 Louisiana Survivors for Reform (New Orleans, LA)
 Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (Silver Spring, MD)
 Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Jefferson City, MO)
 Monsoon Asians & Pacific Islanders in Solidarity (Des Moines, IA)
 Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Helena, MT)
 Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (Lincoln, NE)
 Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (Reno, NV)
 New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence (Trenton, NJ)
 New York State Coalition Against Sexual Assault (Albany, NY)
 Ohio Domestic Violence Network (Columbus, OH)
 Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Harrisburg, PA)
 Red Lodge Transition Services (Oregon City, OR)
 The Illinois Clemency Project for Battered Women (Chicago, IL)
 The Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement (Houston, TX)
 Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Montpelier, VT)
 Violence Free Colorado (Denver, CO)
 Violence Free Minnesota (St Paul, MN)
 Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Richmond, VA)
 Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Seattle, WA)
 Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (Madison, WI)
 Women & Justice Project (New York, NY)
 Women's Law Project (Philadelphia, PA)
 West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Elkview, WV)

Local Organizations

Advocacy Center of Tompkins County (Ithaca, NY)
 ARCS of Warren County (Lebanon, OH)
 AVAIL, Inc. (Antigo, WI)
 Bethany House Abuse Shelter, Inc. (Somerset, KY)
 Boston University Law Immigrants' Rights and Human Trafficking Program (Boston, MA)
 Central New York National Organization For Women (Syracuse, NY)
 Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence (Seattle, WA)
 Council on Domestic Violence for Page Co., Inc. (Luray, VA)
 Criminal Justice Advocacy Clinic, University at Buffalo School of Law (Buffalo, NY)
 Crisis Intervention Service (Mason City, IA)
 Domestic Violence Project at the Urban Justice Center (New York, NY)
 Elizabeth Freeman Center, Inc. (Pittsfield, MA)

Family Law Clinic, University of Pittsburgh School of Law (Pittsburgh, PA)
Family Life Science Education (Chicago Heights, IL)

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Family Rescue (Chicago, IL)
Family Resources (Moline, IL)
Food First, Inc (Brooklyn, NY)
Gender Violence Clinic, University of Maryland Carey School of Law (Baltimore, MD)
Harvard Legal Aid Bureau (Cambridge, MA)
Henry Street Settlement (New York, NY)
Her Justice (New York, NY)
HOPE of East Central Illinois (Charleston, IL)
Hope's Door (Hawthorne, NY)
Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (Rockville, MD)
KAN-WIN (Park Ridge, IL)
Latinas Unidas por un Nuevo Amanecer (L.U.N.A.) (Des Moines, IA)
Lawyers' Committee Against Domestic Violence (New York, NY)
LKLP Safe House (Hazard, KY)
Middle Way House (Bloomington, IN)
Monroe County NOW (Monroe County, IN)
Mujeres Latinas en Accion (Chicago, IL)
National Organization for Women, Columbia Area (Columbia, MO)
National Organization for Women Hollywood Chapter (Hollywood, CA)
National Organization for Women, Palm Beach County (Palm Beach County, FL)
National Organization for Women - Suffolk NY (Stony Brook, NY)
NMIC (New York, NY)
Pasco County National Organization for Women (Pasco County, FL)
Passages, Inc. (Richland Center, WI)
Phoenix Project (Front Royal, VA)
San Francisco Women Against Rape (San Francisco, CA)
Santa Fe NOW (Santa Fe, NM)
South Suburban Family Shelter (Homewood, IL)
Stop Sexual Assault in Schools (Lacey, WA)
The Family Counseling Center (Gloversville, NY)
The Legal Aid Society (New York, NY)
The Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center, University of Maryland Baltimore (Baltimore, MD)
The Safe Center LI, Inc. (Bethpage, NY)
Transformational Therapy Center, LLC (Centerville, OH)
Tri-County Council on Domestic Violence (Rhineland, WI)
Turning Point, Inc. (Woodstock, IL)
Vera House, Inc. (Syracuse, NY)
VOICES of Stephenson County (Freeport, IL)
Women's Crisis Center (Covington, KY)
YWCA of Genesee County (Batavia, NY)

Individuals

A. Wilson
Abby Larson (Oakland, CA)
Abigail Akers (Iowa)

Abigail Katz (California)
Adya Bidiak (Toronto, Canada)
Afua Afriye-Fullwood (New York, NY)

4

Ajima Olaghere (Philadelphia, PA)
Albert Stabler (Normal, Illinois)
Aleksandrea Johnson (Seattle,
WA) Alesha Durfee (Tempe, AZ)
Alex Weathersby (Fredericksburg, VA)
Alexander Vernon (Detroit, MI)
Alexandra Chambers (Nashville, TN)
Alexandra Klein (Lexington, VA) Alicia
L. Jurek (Huntsville, TX) Alicia Martel
(Iowa City, IA)
Alisha Ballinger (Illinois)
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NY) Allison McKim (Annandale,
NY) Allison Ontko (Ohio)
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NY) Andie Celerio (Chicago, IL)
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Anita Sinha (Washington, DC)
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CO) Ann L. Coker (Lexington KY)
Ann E. Sebastian (Mason City,

IA) Ann Shell LaMar (Tulsa, OK)
Ann Legg (Woodstock IL)
Ann Rall (Ypsilanti, MI)
Ann Tweedy (Vermillion, SD)

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Anna E Meyer
Anna Gifford (McHenry County, IL)
Anna Gundersen (Ypsilanti, MI)
Anne Menard (Dover, NH)
Anne Patterson (New York, NY)
Anne Scaperoth (Columbus, OH)
Anne Schaufele (Washington,
DC) Annice Mallory (Quincy, IL)
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Atossa Movahedi (New York, NY)
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Paradiso (Colorado)
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O. Dunlap, MSW (Henrico, VA)
Carol Shoener (Scranton, PA)

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(Huntley, IL)
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Joanne Holstein (Columbus,
OH)

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PA) Joya Joseph (New York, NY)
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PA) Kaileine Dimmick (Freeport,
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OR)
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Katie Kronick (Washington,
DC) Kavita Dsouza (Chicago)
Kay E Rasmusen (Euclid,
Ohio) Kay H. Smith
(Birmingham, AL) Kayleigh
Rhodes (Maine)
Kelly Browe Olson (Little Rock, AR)

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Kelly Slaven (Dallas, TX)
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Kendra Davis (New Orleans,
LA) Kennee Switzer (Cleveland,
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Kit Kinports (State College,
PA) KJ Murtey (Iowa)
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WV) Kristina Rosati (Decatur, IL)
Kristine Scott
Kylie Vaughn (Dayton, OH)
Kyra Evarts (New York, NY)
La'Cretsia (Rock Island, IL)
Laura A. Conour
Laura Baumgart (Salt Lake City,
UT) Laura Coordes (Phoenix, AZ)
Laura Kriegel (Rochester, NY)
Laura M Blackwell (Rossford,

OH) Laura Ruvoli (Homewood,
IL)
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PA) Laura Szurek
Laura Troy (Woodland Park, NJ) Lauren
Onkeles-Klein (Washington, DC)
La'Zeya Sims (Minnesota)
Lea Marineau (Baltimore, MD)
Leigh Goodmark (Baltimore,
MD) Leigh Hofheimer (Seattle,
WA)
Leslie Brown (Chicago, IL)
Linda Barnard (Sacramento, CA)
Linda L. Ammons (Las Vegas,
NV) Linda Olsen (Everett, WA)
Linda Plitt Donaldson (Harrisonburg,
VA) Linda Porter
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DC) Lindsay Smith (Fairfax, VA)
Lindsey DeMarco (Cleveland,
OH) Lindsey Krzyzek (Utica, IL)
Lindsey Pfeiffenberger
(Maine) Lindsey Webb
(Denver, CO)

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Linsey Belisle (Nevada)
Lisa A. Frisch (Hampton, NH)
Lisa A. Goodman (Chestnut Hill, MA)
Lisa Horne (Wheaton, IL)
Lisa Sohn (San Francisco, CA)
Liz Mackey, Dove INC (Piatt County, IL)
Liz Ryan Cole (Thetford, VT)
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Lucia Rivieccio (Brooklyn, NY)
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Macarena Saez (Washington DC)
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DC) Margaret Sherraden (Portland OR)
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Mark S. Homan (Tucson, AZ)
Mark Wynn (Nashville, TN)
Martha J Willi MD (Peoria, IL)
Mary Catherine Roper (Philadelphia,
PA) Mary Denney (Woodstock, IL)
Mary E Beyerhelm Huey (Mason City,
IA) Mary Helen McNeal (Syracuse, NY)
Mary Helene French
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Mary R. Lauby (Madison, WI)
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Mary Wilson
Mary Zahm (Fall River, MA)
Marylouise Kelley (Charlottesville,
VA) Matthew Murphy (Seattle, Wa.)
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Iowa) Max Grieshaber (Ulster
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WA)

Micheal Sherraden (St. Louis,
MO) Michele M. Dupey
Michelle Esrick (New York, NY)
Michelle Geil
Michelle Madden Dempsey (Villanova,
PA) Michelle Meyer (Batavia, IL)
Michelle Pernini (Chicago, IL)
Michelle VanNatta (River Forest,
IL) Mieko Yoshihama (Ann Arbor,
MI) Min A Kim (Chicago, IL)
Mindy Iverson (Woodstock, IL)
Mindy Mechanic (Long Beach,
CA) MK Peterson (Honey Brook,
PA)
Molly Brudnick (Shaker Heights,
OH) Molly Dragiewicz (Australia)
Monika Batra Kashyap (Seattle,
WA) Moya Atkinson (Falls Church,
VA) Mary E. Sims (Kirksville, MO)
Myra Ricard
Myra Terry (New Jersey)
Nancy A. Mayo (Cincinnati, OH)
Nancy Campbell Mead (Portland,
OR) Nancy Chi Cantalupo (San Diego,
CA) Nancy Cunningham
Nancy Erickson (Brooklyn, NY)
Nancy Grigsby (Ohio)
Nancy K D Lemon (Berkeley CA)
Nancy Whitt (Birmingham, AL)
Naomi Taylor (Macomb, IL)

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Narayanan Mandala (Scottsdale,
AZ) Natalee Witt (Michigan)
Natalie J. Sokoloff (Baltimore,
MD) Natalie Pickett (North
Carolina)
Nayely Rosas (Marietta, GA)
Nellie Arrieta (Salt Lake City,
UT) Nickie Phillips (New York)
Nicole Blackman (Woodstock, IL)
Nicole Cisne Durbin (Rock Island,
IL) Nicole E. Noll (Massachusetts)
Nicole Fidler (New York)
Nicole Plumb (Salt Lake City,
UT) Nicole Smolter (Los
Angeles, CA) Nida Abbasi (New
York)
Nili Gesser (Philadelphia, PA)

Nina E. Lewis (Ohio)
Nina Terzian (Las Vegas, NV)
Nina Zaremba (Florida)
Nivedita Mahesh (Tempe, AZ)
Nora Elliott (Richmond, VA)
Odeana R. Neal (Baltimore,
MD) P.W. Booth (Colorado)
Page Kinner (Minnesota)
Pamela Heydt (Cincinnati, OH)
Patrice La Mariana (New York,
NY) Patricia E. Yackel (Virginia)
Patricia Hamad (Ohio)
Paul Picard (Minnesota)
Paula J. Caplan (Rockville, MD)
Paula Julian (Pauma Valley, CA)
Paula Sen (Philadelphia, PA)
Paulette Sullivan Moore (Wilmington,
DE) Paulina Leyva (New York)
Paulina Lucio Maymon (Washington,
DC) Peg Ruddy (Scranton, PA)
Peter Giacobbi (Morgantown,
WV) Phyllis Chesler (New York,
NY)
Phyllis Goldfarb (Takoma Park,
MD) Phyllis B. Taylor (Philadelphia,
PA) Prasanna Mandala (Phoenix,
AZ) Quetita Caverio (Philadelphia,
PA) Rabeya Sen (Los Angeles, CA)
Rachael A. Richter (Dayton,
OH) Rachal Glenn (Ankeny, IA)
Rachel Caidor (Chicago, Illinois)
Rachel Camp (Washington, DC)
Rachel Graber (Denver, CO)
Rachel Van Cleave (San Francisco, CA)

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Rachelle Barmann (Woodstock, IL)
Rana Boujaoude (San Francisco, CA)
Raquel Aldana (Davis, CA)
Rebecca A Freese (Sullivan, IL)
Rebecca Bedwell (Bloomington, IN)
Rebecca Brandenberger (Roanoke, VA)
Rebecca Fitzsimmons (Normal, IL)
Rebecca Ginsburg (Illinois)
Rebecca McCloskey (Columbus, OH)
Rebecca Saunders
Rebecca Waldemar (New Cumberland,
PA) Reena Parikh (Newton Centre, MA)
Riley Severance (Missouri)

Rita Abdallah (Avon Lake, OH)
Rita O'Connor
Rita Smith (Arizona)
Robert L Giron (Arlington, VA)
Roberta L Hacker (Philadelphia, PA)
Robin Earley (Olney, IL)
Robin Gauthier (Virginia Beach, VA)
Robin Morgan (Brattleboro, VT)
Robin Turner (Missoula, MT)
Rolando Galindo (Chicago, IL)
Romy Lerner (Miami, FL)
Ronyale Fogle (Illinois)
Rose Corrigan (Philadelphia, PA)
Rosemary Barberet (New York, USA)
Ruchama Cohen (New York, NY)
Ruth Anne Robbins (Camden, NJ)
Ruth Fleury-Steiner (Newark, DE)
Ruth G. Micklem (Richmond, VA)
Ruth Whitney (St. Petersburg, FL)
Ryan Hanson (Merrill, WI)
S. Jeanne Hagelskamp (Saint Mary-of-the-Woods,
IN) Sally Frank (Des Moines, IA)
Sally N. MacNichol (New York, NY)
Salome Rivera (Gainesville, FL)
Samantha S. (Illinois)
Sandra J. Bieri (Austin, TX)
Sandra Ramirez (Portland, OR)
Sandy J Clark (Mount Holly, NJ)
Sara Bennett (Brooklyn, NY)
Sara Krall (Madison, WI)
Sara Rosenberg (Iowa)
Sara Rust-Martin (Topeka, KS)
Sara Siebert (Ames, IA)
Sarah Crawford (New York, NY)
Sarah Deer (Lawrence, KS)

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Sarah Degner Riveros (St. Paul,
MN) Sarah Jane Rhee (Chicago, IL)
Sarah Katz (Philadelphia, PA) Sarah
Khan (San Francisco, CA) Sarah Lorr
(Brooklyn, NY)
Sarah Paduano (Illinois)
Sarah Sweeney (Ohio)
Sarah Ullman (Chicago IL)
Sean Woolard
Sebastian B. (Indiana)
Seema Zey (Florida)
Selene Garcia (Chicago, IL)

Shamita Das Dasgupta (Montville,
NJ) Shana Tabak (Atlanta, GA)
Shannon Hanf (Ohio)
Shannon Harper (Ames, IA)
Shannon Zaucha (Illinois)
Shanta Trivedi (Washington, DC)
Sharon L. Allport (Joliet, IL)
Sharon L. Barnes (Toledo, OH)
Shatna Osorno (Chicago, IL)
Sheetal Ranjan (Wayne, NJ)
Sheila Finan (Accord, NY)
Shelby Phillips (California)
Sheri L Curry (Tulsa, OK)
Sherrie Bell (London, KY)
Shreya Dabeer (Tempe, AZ)
Skyler Stevens (New Mexico)
Solangel Maldonado (Newark, NJ)
Sophie Davis (Philadelphia, PA)
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Stacey Nicholson (Arizona)
Stacie Cottrell (Utah)
Stacy C. Hansen (Alabama)
Stacy Jarboe (Takoma Park, MD)
Stephanie S. Covington (La Jolla,
CA) Stephanie Coy (Salt Lake City,
UT) Stephanie N. (Maine)
Stewart Aledort (Washington,
DC) Stormy O'Brink (Iowa City, IA)
Sue Osthoff (Philadelphia, PA)
Sue Rosenberg
sujatha baliga (Berkeley, CA)
Sumana Mandala (Scottsdale, AZ)
Susan B. Sorenson (Philadelphia,
PA) Susan Bennett (Baltimore, MD)
Susan Bobson (Columbus, OH)

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Susan Bramlet Lavin (Illinois)
Susan Bursztynsky (Ottawa, IL) Susan
E. Roche (South Burlington, VT)
Susan F. Sharp (Oklahoma)
Susan Frietsche (Pittsburg, PA) Susan
Gibson (Jefferson City, MO) Susan
Macpherson (Minneapolis, MN)
Susan Marcus-Mendoza (Norman,
OK) Susan L. Miller (Newark, DE)
Susan Nierenberg (Teaneck, NJ)
Susan Olson (Minneapolis MN)

Susan Xenarios (New York, NY)
Susanna Saul (Brooklyn, NY)
Suzann Ordile (USA)
Suzanne Coble (Arizona)
Suzanne Rothman (New York, NY)
T.L. Krone (Roseburg, OR)
Tamar Kraft-Stolar (New York, NY)
Tamara Chin Loy (Virginia Beach, VA)
Tamara Hawk (Chauncey, OH)
Tamara Kuennen (Denver, CO)
Tammy L. Sharpe (Virginia)
Taunya Lovell Banks (Baltimore, MA)
Taylor Hughes (Iowa)
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Tessa Kuipers (Illinois)
Theresa Davis (New York)
Theresa L. White (Syracuse,
NY) Theresa White (Kentucky)
Thomas A. Schaaf (San Francisco,
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Tina Knupp (Virginia)
Todd A. Spencer (Colorado Springs,
CO) Torrie Benson-Pryor (Woodstock,
IL) Tracey M. Roberts (Birmingham, AL)
Triana Arnold James
Trish Johnson (Cresco, IA)
Tzvia Schweitzer (Virginia)
Ursula Tobright
Valena Beety (Phoenix, AZ)
Valeria Smith (London, KY)
Vanessa Lowe (Philadelphia, PA)
Vanessa Timmons (Portland, OR)
Vashti Savage-Jones (Heathsville, VA)
Veronica M Herrera (California)

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Vi Le (Phoenix, AZ)
Vickie Smith (Springfield, IL)
Victoria Chase (Haddonfield, NJ)
Victoria Reynolds (Hillsborough, NC)
Victoria Ybanez (Colorado Springs,
CO) Virginia Belford (Nevada)
Virginia Daugherty (Charlottesville VA)
Walter DeKeseredy (Morgantown,
WV) Wendy Hess (Vermillion, SD)
Wendy Hinton Vaughn (Rockford, IL)

Yasmin Campos-Mendez (New York, NY)
Yeonju Ahn (Chicago, IL)
Yvette Dunnigan (Portland,
ME) Zack Miller (Richmond,
VA)