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The Lake Assignment

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When it comes to Amanda Hamms' three children's deaths and the prosecution's handling, many things that stood out to me that I think could have been handled differently. When looking into Amanda and Maurice's biracial relationship, their financial problems, and interviews recorded between Amanda and the investigators, I have many uneasy feelings towards their sentencing.

After listening to this episode, I believe this was an unfortunate accident. I do not think Maurice had any intention to end those children's lives that evening after dinner. On the other hand, I believe the police-involved made assumptions from the very beginning based on Maurice and Amanda's social status. During recorded interviews, the police continuously mentioned to Amanda that Maurice saw her kids as baggage. Although Amanda denied this and Maurice's ex-girlfriends testified in court that he was great with their children in previous relationships, the prosecutors and police officers continued to make Maurice seem aggressive and possibly annoyed with the children, referring to them as "baggage." The police mentioned them living in public housing and how overwhelmed Amanda must be raising three kids independently and implying she would be better off financially without the children.

During Maurice's testimony, it seemed to me that he genuinely cared for the three children. I was concerned when he stated he had played a joke on one of the boys by putting him inside the oven, but I do not think he was ever malicious in his behavior. He did not treat their mother well, admitting he cheated multiple times and did not love her during his trial, but in regards to his behavior with children, I do not believe he was hateful. During his trial, Maurice mentioned he was joking around with the kids by pretending to drive into the lake, and that is when the car began to go forward, and he stated he panicked. He had poor judgment, but I don't believe it was intentional.

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One of my main issues with this case is that the prosecutors did not try Maurice and Amanda in court for the same crime. He was only tried for murder while Amanda was allowed to be tried in court for child endangerment. In my opinion, they were both equally to blame for this incident and should be charged in court for the same crime. I do believe she was allowed a lesser charge because of racial bias. She may not have been driving the vehicle, but she should have been held just as responsible as Maurice was when it came time for trial. I believe he was charged with a more heinous crime because of his race. I did not hear anything in the podcast stating he had a prior record that possibly could have made the charges for him more serious.

One considerable concern I have as a future healthcare provider is that Amanda was questioned for seven hours, without representation, after receiving three different psychotropic medications. Although I don't know what medications she was given, I know that these medications affect the brain and nervous system's chemical makeup. I don't believe she should have been questioned about the drowning while being on any psychotropic medication. She could have had adverse side effects such as memory problems that could have caused her to give the police inaccurate information.

Even though Amanda was convicted of child endangerment, I believe she has the right to have additional children after serving her nearly five years in prison. I don't want to control someone else's reproductive rights, but Amanda served her time in jail for something that I genuinely believe was an accident. She lost all three of her children and went to jail and did her time. Amanda should not be punished forever.

When Amanda gave birth to her third child, I don't believe the hospital staff had the right to notify DCFS. There did not seem to be any prior complaints with Amanda and her two daughters before giving birth to her son. The hospital staff just seemed to connect with who

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Amanda was and her past. They took all three of her children away without any accusations of those children being mistreated. I do not like the "anticipatory neglect in this case." Amanda seemed to be moving on with her life, getting married, having more children, and serving her time in prison for prior mistakes and still being punished years later. There were absolutely no reports of abuse or neglect. Not to mention, Amanda's husband was not involved in the children drowning in 2003. After listening to the issues Amanda and her new husband had in the past, I do think the counseling ordered was beneficial to their children. However, I still believe they should be allowed to raise their kids, and the judge should not be holding the drowning against her. As future healthcare providers, we are going to be mandated reporters. "Mandated Reporters are required to call the DCFS hotline immediately when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may be an abused or neglected child. The hotline worker will determine if the information given by the reporter meets the legal requirements to initiate an investigation." (Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in Illinois, n.d.) In this situation, with Amanda Hamm and her new husband, I don't believe there was a reasonable cause to notify DCFS.

References

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