

Amy – survivor of a homicide victim

Jill was on the second floor. The first-floor apartment was empty, and the basement floor was inhabited by the man that killed her. He apparently had gotten the idea that Jill was narcing on drug dealers in the area, and he had been dealing drugs out of the apartment. She had been there 2 months. She had no idea he was waiting for her when she returned home from work at 1:00 in the morning. And he punched her in the face, stunning her, and got her tied up and spent 6 hours killing her, raping and killing her. Eight years later it still seems like yesterday.

They did not want any of us seeing her because she had been so badly beaten. Uh, I was allowed to hug a body bag that was on the elevator in the funeral home. And I basically said the good-byes for the entire family at that point. Jill's murder left me with this huge gaping void in my gut, and I felt like if I ever let anybody close enough to see that they'd either think that I'm crazy or they would be terrified by what I had to show them.

I became really, really suicidal after Jill's death and wanted very badly to be with her. My oldest sister became pretty agoraphobic. It's still difficult for her, 8 years later, to leave the house without a strong family member with her. My brother, who had problems with alcohol prior, became a full-blown alcoholic. Now I am hyper vigilant, so unless I know everything that's going on, I'm not comfortable. Eight years later, I'm still sleeping with the door locked. I have insomnia now . . . stomach problems that make it impossible for me to eat out. It's like traveling . . . grief. So it just keeps remanifesting in different . . . different areas, but it's all the same pain and anger that are sitting in there.

I got the nickname "angry Amy" when I was working at the salon, and I don't think I was showing any anger at all, you know? I . . . some of my reactions, you know, if this guy that's in prison for my sister's homicide, if he gets raped and killed, I don't care. And maybe that's what they were perceiving as anger. That's—I don't see it as being anger. I see it as being realistic. [laughs bitterly]

I can't care about his life. He was found guilty of first-degree murder. He was found guilty of rape. It was the death penalty plus 60. The death penalty was then overturned on appeal to a life sentence.

The biggest thing as far as offenders in homicide goes is the fact that there is not just one victim. You're not just stopping at that one person. They're destroying many, many lives. My quality of life will never be the same as it was, you know. My innocence is completely gone. There's very little that life can show me that is gonna be as good as when Jill was alive.