

Biography

"England is a supposed model of democracy and justice, yet ironically I have so far been made to serve longer for being rebellious and non-conformist than the Yorkshire Ripper has for 13 serial Killings. Nowadays, painting is the only thing that keeps me alive."

Gary Critchley

Born in Birmingham and raised on an estate that bordered on two mental hospitals, visiting and often staying with his elder brother in care homes and approved schools, Gary was introduced to institutions at a very early age. At 8 years old he got drunk on alcohol and by the age of 12 he was drinking on a regular basis. Aged 14, Gary became a punk rocker, was recruited to the Young Socialist party and excluded from school for leading 'pupil-power' marches and picketing the school. Also aged 14 Gary was sent to juvenile detention centre for criminal damage and theft. During his time there he was physically and mentally abused and he describes this as a very negative period of his life.

Upon release he quickly deteriorated, abusing various drugs and becoming involved with crime. In 1980, six months after being released from borstal, he moved to live in London. In June of that year he was discovered severely injured four stories below the flat he was squatting and was taken to hospital with a broken back, arm, legs and head injuries. When police investigated the circumstances, they found the body of another man in Gary's squat. Charged and bailed for this man's murder, Gary returned to Birmingham where even on crutches he continued his life of punk rock gigs and substance abuse.

In May 1981, he was found guilty of murder (despite numerous forensic discrepancies) and sentenced to be 'detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure', the juvenile equivalent of a life sentence. The then Lord Chief Justice recommended that he should serve 'no more than 8-9 years'. Despite this it was a full 20 years before Gary was first released in July 2000.

Gary was recalled to prison three months later for having sexual relationships with two female peers at his rehab unit and running away with one of them. After another three years in prison for these breaches of his license conditions, he was again released in 2003 to another drink/drug rehab centre. Twelve months later in 2004 he was again recalled to prison for missing a probation appointment. He's still there.

Over the last five years in prison, Gary has suffered from severe depression and made three serious attempts to take his own life. After the second attempt, Gary was introduced to drawing and painting for the first time in and has since become a prolific painter. He has won a Koestler award for one of his paintings and has been both encouraged and inspired to paint by the staff of a Cambridge University library that

have bought and exhibited several of his early works and sponsor him with materials etc.

Despite unanimous recommendations of release and the parole board agreeing that he does not constitute a risk to the public, Gary was recently refused parole on the grounds that if he was ever to relapse into drink/drug use there was a "possibility" that he "could" re-offend violently. This was despite all professional opinion and the masses of evidence to the contrary where Gary has been in active addiction without any such incident.

This ruling is currently the subject of a judicial review, being in breach of not only the Human Rights Act but also several judicial rulings regarding Lifers. There are also investigations still going on into the events surrounding the index offence, of which Gary to this day has no memory.

Gary describes his on-going imprisonment as "warehousing". He has now actually served more than three times the recommended sentence. He maintains that he never murdered anyone, never intended to hurt anyone and has never before or indeed since the age of 17 been involved in any violence. He says he is now semi-institutionalised and a true product of the system. No longer jailed in relation to the original offence, he has become somewhat of a political prisoner: being punished over and over by a retributive system for his years of rebellion and breaches of petty rules.