

PRISON BREAK

In 1994, the state of Mississippi convicted Jamie Scott, 20, and her sister Gladys, 19, of robbery and sentenced them each to two life terms. The sisters denied any part in the ambush and \$11.00 robbery of two men.

Following a lengthy campaign by supporters from churches, radio stations, newspapers, the Internet, and the NAACP, Governor Haley Barbour considered the issue for over a year and finally, in late December 2010, signed orders suspending the Scott sisters' prison terms. A condition attached to the release required Gladys to donate a kidney to Jamie.

Jamie suffered from diabetes and high blood pressure, and required dialysis three times a week after suffering kidney failure in January 2010. According to the 4 January 2011 St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Jamie Scott's dialysis cost the Mississippi Corrections Department (MCD) about \$200,000 in 2010.

Governor Barbour said he considered the request carefully for a year before making his decision, and granted the request for many reasons: Jamie Scott's declining health, the cost to the state for her health care, the belief that the sisters no longer posed a threat to others, and Gladys Scott's offer to donate a kidney to Jamie. The MCD would not pay for a transplant; however, state officials said they believed the sisters would be eligible for Medicaid.

Jamie and Gladys left prison as free women on 17 January 2011.

An ethics committee of the United Network for Organ Sharing, which administers the organ transplant system in the United States, denounces as coercive organ donation by prisoners in exchange for reduced sentences. The committee asserts that such coercion disproportionately affects the poor and minorities, two groups overrepresented in prison populations and often the victims of a system of arbitrary sentencing. Critics of conditioning release from prison on organ donation argue that requiring organ donation as a condition of prison release constitutes a cruel and unusual punishment that opens the door to abuse of vulnerable prisoners. Opponents also raise concerns about prisoners' health, often compromised due to communicable diseases, poor diet, lack of exercise, and limited access to health care.