



**A LOOK FOR ONLOOKERS:** Convicted killer Clara Harris looks toward her supporters after the end of testimony on Jan. 16. ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Suppose roles had been reversed in Harris case . . .

■ **Murdered dad deserves sympathy being shown Clara**

By **MIKE MCCORMICK**  
and **GLENN SACKS**

**P**OLICE squad cars all across America bear the slogan, "There's no excuse for domestic violence." Yet there is one situation in which the media and the public seem to feel that domestic violence is sometimes excusable — when the perpetrator is a woman, and the victim is a man.

Imagine a woman trapped in a loveless marriage with a jealous, potentially violent husband whom she believes may be cheating on her. She stays in the marriage because she fears she could be separated from her children should they divorce, and finds understanding, companionship and passion in a relationship with a coworker. Her husband finds out about the affair and goes on a violent, jealous rampage, slaughtering her in front of her daughter as the daughter begs him not to kill her mother.

There would be no tears or excuses for the killer, and nobody would dare to proffer the fact that his wife had been cheating on him as a justification for the murder.

These are the facts of the Clara Harris case, with the genders reversed. Yet the reaction has been quite different.

The media on both the left and the right have poured derision upon the murder victim, referring to David Harris as a "creep," a "rat," a "lying, cheating scumbag" and Clara Harris' "unfaithful dog of a husband." Commentator Susan Estrich asked, "Who could blame [Clara] for getting into her Mercedes and running him over?" and seemed a little sad that the Harris County criminal trial jury did. Conservative talk show host Joseph Farah penned a column entitled "Free Clara Harris!" in which he wrote, "I'd give her a medal. . . . She did the right thing. That creep deserved what he got."

Even the prosecutor in the murder trial, Mia Magness, expressed her disgust, saying that Clara, instead of killing David by her own hand, should have "[done] like every other woman . . . get his house, car, kids — make him wish he were dead." Lorna Mullens, the jury forewoman in the recently concluded wrongful death trial, also expressed sympathy for Clara.

CBS portrayed Clara as a pitiable, betrayed

wife in a 2004 movie, and Oprah Winfrey sympathetically interviewed the sobbing Clara from prison in 2005. Of the 354 news stories covering the wrongful death trial that are indexed on Google News, 233 refer to David Harris as Clara Harris' "cheating husband." Not one mentions the phrase "domestic violence."

The truth behind the Clara Harris case has come from the mouth of a child — David's daughter, Lindsey. Only 16 years old at the time of the murder, Lindsey rode in the front seat with Clara and begged her not to kill her father. Lindsey has denounced the widespread media sympathy for Clara, saying:

"[Clara has appeared] in print and on television to persuade the viewers that she is actually the victim, but she is no victim. What she did was the ultimate act of selfishness, caring only about obtaining revenge and thinking not one bit about how her horrible act was going to affect me or my brothers, Brian and Bradley. Anyone who shared my ride in the car that evening, seeing my dad's face as he was about to be hit, and experiencing the horrible feel of the car bumping over his body would understand that this murderess deserves no sympathy."

Bobbi Bacha, vice president of Blue Moon Investigators, the private detective agency Clara had hired to spy on David, also conducted an investigation of Clara. Though the media have largely ignored it, in November 2002 Bacha presented the criminal court with several audio tapes on which witnesses claim that Clara was also having an affair before she killed David.

Lindsey says that Clara mistreated and neglected David, and that her father often confided in her how lonely he felt. Coupled with Clara's temper and evident capacity for violence, David had ample reason to want to get out of the relationship. Instead of letting him go, Clara killed him.

While many see the Clara Harris case as one of love and betrayal, it is in fact a garden-variety domestic homicide.

Clara Harris is no better than high-profile wife-killer Scott Peterson. Perhaps Clara is even worse — at least Peterson spared us the crocodile tears.

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