

10/29/2021

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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CHARLES WATTS :  
*Petitioner-Defendant,* :  
- v. - :

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, : Criminal Docket No. 92-767 (SJ)  
*Respondent.* :

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**DECLARATION OF CHARLES WATTS**

I, Charles Watts, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746 and subject to penalties of perjury, state the following is true and correct:

1. My name is Charles Edward Watts. I am 51 years old. I was born in Brooklyn, New York on February 11, 1970.
2. I am currently incarcerated at USP Allenwood in Allenwood, Pennsylvania. I have been incarcerated since I was 22 years old. I was arrested in June 1992 and sentenced to 92 years in prison after being convicted of multiple armed robbery charges.

**My Early Life**

3. I grew up the youngest of four siblings. I was very close to my family growing up and spent a lot of time playing video games and softball, listening to music, and riding dirt bikes. I was always closest to my big sister, Evelyn Watts.
4. I was very into the video game Dungeons & Dragons and had dreams to become an entrepreneur and do graphic design or build video games. I remember from a young age I was always inventing things.
5. My father, Charles Edward Watts, and mother, Lillian Watts, divorced in 1986 and things became very difficult for me and my siblings. I moved back and forth between living with my mother and father. I also became very rebellious in trying to get my father's attention.

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6. My father was a strict guy and I was scared of him because he would beat me up if I did anything wrong. He remarried and it was hard for me to live with him because I saw his wife as taking the place of my mother. I dropped out of high school while living with my father.
7. I eventually began to live with my mother full time. My mother was struggling financially and relied on Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). She also had a disability and was in a wheelchair. I became her main caretaker because my father refused to help her financially and my siblings had other responsibilities in their lives and could not help out as much.
8. During this time, I also became a young father to two children. I knew I wanted to be a good father to them and provide some of the things I never had growing up.
9. I tried to get various odd jobs to help out my family. I worked as a dishwasher in a dining area for students in Manhattan for some time. However, the money I made doing these odd jobs was never enough.

#### **My Criminal Actions**

10. I was a really naive kid and wanted to impress my friends so it was easy for me to fall for peer pressure.
11. Between my mom's disability and being a young father of two children, I felt that I had a big responsibility to provide for my family.
12. I met Shawn Daniels when we were about 13 or 14 years old. He was like a brother to me. We understood each other because we both came from families that were struggling. When the idea to commit robberies came up in the 1990s, I did not think fully about the consequences. When Shawn and I did not get caught after the first robbery, it seemed so easy — like a game. Most of the money I got went towards paying bills and buying food and clothing. We were able to take care of our families so we continued with the robberies.
13. I never intended to harm anyone during the robberies. I didn't fully understand the seriousness of it all and just saw my actions as an easy way to care for my family.
14. When I was arrested I was in shock. I was incarcerated before and during my trial and felt so scared for my future. When I was sentenced to almost 100 years in prison, the real

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consequence of my actions became clear to me. I felt so much shame for what I was putting my family through. I worried about my young children.

### My Growth in Prison

15. I made serious mistakes at a young age and have spent the last three decades paying for them.
16. While I've been in prison I've grown up from a confused 22 year boy to a strong minded man. I have come to realize that some of the decisions I made caused me to be in this place. I now know that our actions determine the outcomes of our lives.
17. I have been able to take responsibility for my actions. With time to think seriously about what I did, I realized that I was so angry and hurt by feelings of abandonment from my dad. It made me act on impulse and my pain made it hard for me to see consequences of my choices on other people I scared or hurt. Even though in my mind, I knew I would not hurt anyone, I now think about the people in the banks we robbed and realize how scared they must have been. I feel sorry about that and wish I could tell those I harmed that I am sorry for what I did. I felt relief — like a load of pressure being taken off me — once I took responsibility. Taking responsibility for myself and no longer blaming my dad or others for where I am in life was a big step in my rehabilitation.
18. The biggest turning point in my life was in 1997, when my mom passed away. I was crushed that I couldn't go to the funeral. I thought to myself "if I wasn't in prison I would've been able to take care of her so she could have lived longer or at least have gone to the funeral to say goodbye." That's when I really started to take steps to change my life, not just by taking responsibility for my actions, but to do more to help others and become the man my mom knew I could be.
19. After my mom passed away, I grew more deeply religious. I always believed in God but I began to take religion more seriously. Being involved with church in the prison helped me walk a straighter path because I surrounded myself with other positive people who also wanted to better themselves. A lot of bad things happen in prison and I didn't want to be around negative influences anymore like I was on the outside. I chose the positive.
20. As part of staying on the right path, I have made sure to stay out of trouble while incarcerated. However, there are some incidents on my disciplinary record.
21. My most recent disciplinary event is from three years ago, for the use of non-prescribed pain medication. While in prison, I've dealt with various health issues including being

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diagnosed with sarcoidosis, scar tissue in my lungs, in 2000, and extreme lower back pain, which I developed from a motorcycle accident shortly before I was incarcerated. The clinic in the prison doesn't give anything stronger than ibuprofen for pain unless you go through surgery and ibuprofen does nothing for my lower back pain. So, there are a few times where I accepted stronger pain medication from friends for my pain and received disciplinary infractions.

22. I have had a nonviolent history while in prison. There is a charge in my disciplinary record for "possession of a dangerous weapon" from 2017 but as I explained to the officer, the item was a comb with a little black razor attached before the teeth in order to shave hair. This was never to be used as a weapon but rather to groom myself. The other "possession of a dangerous weapon" charge in my disciplinary history is from 2012. My cellmate had a knife taped outside his window but refused to take responsibility so we both were sanctioned. I also have a charge from early in my incarceration, in 1993, for "fighting with another person." However, as the other person and I told the staff, we were joking around and no one was harmed.
23. Because I didn't get the chance to further my education and was so young when I was incarcerated, I had a real eagerness to learn. I've completed over 30 courses in prison. I loved these courses because they gave me something to do to stay out of trouble and work toward skills that could help me once I was released. Specifically, the residential wiring, OSHA, and commercial driver's license (CDL) courses were my favorite because they have the potential to help me access jobs once I am released. I also enjoyed the parenting classes because they helped me keep in tune with my family and understand how to better connect with my kids.
24. Shortly after being incarcerated my then girlfriend had our third child. It is hard for me to know that my kids grew up without their father present. I tried my best to be there for them through letters and phone calls, but it's not the same.

### **My Hope for the Future and Release Plan**

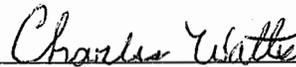
25. I am a different person today than I was when I was first incarcerated. I fully recognize the harm I caused others and now appreciate the value of my life and want a chance to have a life out of prison where I can reunite with my loved ones.
26. When I meet young men in prison, I tell them my story and mentor them on the importance of making good choices in life. I talk to them about the decisions they made and encourage them to be positive about their future. I would like to continue this type of

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mentorship and use my experience to teach other young people about personal responsibility, making good choices and respect for others.

27. If released from prison, I will go live with my older sister and best friend, Evelyn Watts, in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. She has been there for me throughout my entire time in prison and is my biggest support system. In Pennsylvania, I will be closer to my kids and grandchildren who live in New York and Maryland.
28. What I am mostly looking forward to is providing for my family the *right* way. I grew up in poverty; I came from nothing. I want to be able to provide a better life for my family. I don't want them to have to go through the same things I went through. I don't want them to feel like they need to make the mistakes I made and wind up in prison. I want to leave something for my grandchildren when I die.
29. That's why I am eager to work and provide financially for my family if released. If released, my good friend and the godfather of my two youngest children, Ronnie Gibbons, has already offered me a position as a fulltime cable technician at his company Quantum Technology Group (QTG). I am excited about this opportunity because I am eager to learn more skills and think I am good with my hands.
30. Just like I did in prison, I plan to surround myself with people who are doing positive things. I am no longer so easily influenced as I was when I was 19 and naive. I'm older now and understand the value of life and how my choices, whether good or bad, impact other people. I want to have a good effect on people.
31. In the last 30 years I have grown and changed so much. I am grateful for this time to get on the right path. I am now ready to go back into the world, be with my family, and be a productive member of society.

Dated: October 26, 2021



Charles Watts