

1-13-22

Dear Judge Johnson,

First of all, I want to thank you for taking the time to consider my growth and rehabilitation as I request compassionate release. The last 30-years and the process of putting together this motion has really helped me to reflect on my actions all those years ago in my youth.

I am writing this letter to make it clear that I take full responsibility for my actions. Part of my journey has been to really think about why I did what I did. Every day I think about it and can't believe how young, foolish, and selfish I was. I wasn't thinking at all, it was cruel of me to hold a gun up to anyone and it was foolish of me to not understand how terrifying that would be, even though it was never my intentions to hurt anyone.

Sir, for a long time I felt such guilt for the fear I must have caused those people who were just going about their day. I knew I was never going to hurt anybody but after seeing them at trial it really sunk in how scared they must have been to have a gun pointed at them. I am truly sorry to each and every one of those victims. I wish I could apologize to them all personally face to face so that they can see and hear the sincerity in my apology. And I hope that over the years they have been able to heal from the trauma I caused them.

I've looked back at the summer of 1991 and have wondered "how could I have done something like that" I am disappointed and ashamed that I allowed myself to be peer pressured into going along with those robberies. I am ashamed because, ultimately, I chose to go through with the robberies. But now as a level headed adult I see now that we are all responsible for our choices. We may not have chosen the cards we are dealt in this life; but we can always choose a better path. Even though my living situation was not ideal with a sick mom and a low income, my choices only made things worse.

2

My Choices back then just didn't make sense. They were the choices of a child now I am a grown man. I was somewhat rebellious in many situations so as to try and get my father's guidance, love, and attention but instead got his abuse because of my behavior. I wish I would have focused on my dream of becoming an entrepreneur instead. It is clear to me now that I wasn't thinking long term about my decisions and that this naivety caused many people harm. Like so many other families in my neighborhood back then my family needed the money. But I was selfish in thinking I could just take it with no regard for others. I am so sorry to all of the people I harmed with my bad choices: The innocent people in the robberies, my family who have suffered all of these years without me being there, and my kids who grew up without a father.

Being incarcerated for 30-years has given me the time to really think about why I did what I did. I can confidently say that, I am not that confused young kid I was back then and given the same choice today, I would choose differently. I no longer seek validation from anyone, I make my own decisions and think them through. There was truly no excuse for my actions when I committed these acts. I know now that no matter what, committing crimes is never going to solve my problems. It's the worst thing you can do. I have grown and can be the man that I know I've become, the father I never had to my kids, grandkids, and a productive member in my community. I really want to pursue my dream of being a father, an entrepreneur, and a mentor. I've done the best that I can while in prison to prepare to meet these goals.

For the most part, I have stayed out of trouble. My last infraction was over three years ago for having a razor on a little black comb that we as inmate use to cut our hair because we didn't have any access to the barber shop because of the covid-19 pandemic. I do understand that it is not permitted for us to have but I only meant to be able to cut my hair and beard. I fully admitted that I had

(3)

possession of the comb/razor and took full responsibility and have stayed away from such behavior ever since. I know I am not perfect but I do try to be better every day. You can see a huge difference from my early days in prison as I was still adjusting. In 1993 it was clear that I was young and still learning (having play fights with my friends and not really understanding that you can't do those sorts of things in prison). Prison is really a tough environment. I see violence and people making bad choices all around me every day. I am proud of my good behavior in prison and of all the certificates and courses I have been able to participate in.

These courses, my dream of being reunited with my children, and my faith in God have kept me going. My favorite courses have been the ones that have taught me work skills and parenting skills. I want to always be sure that I have a skill that can help me make a living. I want to live with honor and provide for my children and grandbabies. My biggest punishment has been not being able to be the kind of dad I want to be for my children. I've always had this idea of being a better father than my own dad was to me. I have done the best I can through phone calls and visits but nothing compares to being able to hold your babies. My three children Shadasia, Charles Jr, and Daevon are now grown up older than I was when I went to prison.

If I am released I will be living with my sister Evelyn Watts in Pennsylvania. She has done so much to help me over the years and still continues to do so by offering me a place to live and a strong support system. She has a disability and I would help take care of her and she would help me transition back into the outside world. She is also a member of Patterson Church which is where I would continue practicing my faith.

My good friend Ronald is part owner of a telecommunications company and has offered me a job as a cable technician in Pennsylvania. I took a residential wiring course in prison that I'm hopeful will help me adjust quickly to my new responsibilities. The job pays \$22 an hour and I am so excited about being able to help my family with my income.

4

being free and financially stable will finally give me the opportunity to be there for my kids and to also help them out with their kids now that I am also a grandfather of five! I cannot wait to see and play games with them and do all the things I couldn't do with my own children. My children have tried to be strong during my incarceration but every once in a while they break down and cry and tell me how much they miss and need me. It's really hard for me to hide how I feel, I try to joke with them on the phone just to keep myself from crying. I miss them so much they are my world.

As I have gotten older I'm also more concerned with my health, especially with the pandemic. I am worried that if my (Sarcoidosis) flared up and I caught COVID-19 I would get seriously ill or even die. I do my best to take care of myself by wearing my mask. After reading some of the medical research sent by my lawyers I have decided to take the vaccine in order to reduce the likelihood of serious symptoms. I am still scared though because I know there are breakthrough cases and I hear about new variants and lots of people getting sick. Even with the vaccine I know people can still contract COVID-19 and get really sick it is clear to me the pandemic is not over.

I know some may think that I've "only served less than a third of my sentence" but 30 years is a very long time to reflect and to learn and do better. In those 30 years I have learned that every decision has a consequence and that you need to think of your family and society with every choice you make. Sir, I am not that young man I used to be back then I have learned that life is about tough decisions and being the best that you can be no matter what the circumstances.

I ask that you consider me for compassionate release. Now that I am rehabilitated, I am not only not a danger, but I believe I will be a benefit to society. If I am released I will commit myself to making up for lost time with my children/family and mentoring at-risk youth because I believe in my heart that if you catch some of these

5

kids in the early stages that some of them can be saved. I believe if I had had a positive influence in my life I may have made better choices. I want to be that positive influence for other young men like myself. If I am released I will continue the work I started in prison and will mentor young men who are on a bad path. I want to be plugged into my community in Pennsylvania and do violence disruption work (speaking with young men who are thinking of or committing crimes), if I could speak to my younger self I would tell him to think before he acts. I can't travel back into time, but I can help to make the future better for other young men and women who are at risk of ending up in jail.

I am already a lesson for young people on what not to do no one wants to end up in jail like me. But if I am released and given a second chance to contribute to society, I will also be a lesson on how to turn around the biggest mistake of your life. I want to show the world that it is never too late to start over again and do better.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and consider my case. I feel that I am rehabilitated and deserve a second chance I hope that you can see that too, your Honor.

Charles Watts