

# **APPLICATION FOR EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY FOR LEIF C. HALVORSEN**

I believe that there is a level of depth within each of us that we don't realize we have until our backs are against the wall. This is something I have truly come to understand in coming to know Leif [Halvorsen]. He is a person who faces death every day. Rather than letting that make him bitter or angry, as many people do, he has used it as a reason to reach within and find his deepest, most spiritual self, and, perhaps for the first time in his life, come to a true understanding of God's love and his own intrinsic worth.

-Dr. M. Douglas Clark, Methodist Lay Speaker

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Governors often receive a large number of clemency petitions shortly before the end of the Governor's Term. However, a Governor rarely receives a clemency petition from a truly reformed and remorseful death-sentenced inmate who, while in prison, has dedicated his life to the memory of the victims, to improving himself, to counseling others to avoid what led to his downfall, and to counseling people through the hardships and traumas life has dealt them. *It is even rarer to see an inmate so successful that the prison itself has credited the death-sentenced inmate with changing lives of troubled youth. Leif Halvorsen is that person.* This is a brief story about Leif's transformation while in prison and how he has inspired a countless number of people, helped troubled individuals turn their lives around, and guided others through trying, difficult, and traumatic events in their lives.

Clemency is the "fail-safe of the judicial system,"<sup>1</sup> providing a last opportunity to exercise mercy and administer true justice in cases where action is merited and the court system is without the capacity to take the appropriate action. The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has pointed out that a case of true personal reform and efforts to improve the world is just that case: "Although [petitioner's] good works and accomplishments since incarceration may make him a worthy candidate for the exercise of gubernatorial discretion, they are not matters that we in the federal judiciary are at liberty to take into consideration in our review of [petitioner's] habeas corpus petition."<sup>2</sup> This clemency petition asks you, Governor Bevin, to exercise the power of clemency in the exact vein for which it was designed – to commute the death sentence of a man who has undergone incredible personal reform and growth, so he can continue his positive influence on others, both inside and outside the prison, and to guide those who are otherwise at risk for a life of violent crime.

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<sup>1</sup> *Herrera v. Collins*, 506 U.S. 390, 415 (1993).

<sup>2</sup> *Williams v. Woodford*, 384 F.3d 567, 628 (9th Cir. 2002).

### **Leif's life leading up to his conviction**

Leif was born to Robert and Edith Halverson, who until their death, stayed in touch with Leif. He also has an older sister Deborah, who remains in touch with him to this day. She remembers Leif as a good and loving kid: "He never got into a fight as a child. [Though there were guns in the household . . .]. Leif would avoid guns whenever possible. He did not want to harm or hurt anything, not even an animal. Leif loved animals so much that he would regularly bring stray dogs home to be loved, nurtured, and taken care of." Exhibit 3 (Deborah Mauldin letter).

Leif married while in his teens, and "had been totally in love with his wife." Exhibit 3 (Deborah Mauldin letter); exhibit 10 (Police Officer Fred Kelly letter). They had two children. But not long after that, his wife's bipolar disorder overtook her life. She left Leif and the children, and divorced Leif, "destroy[ing] him financially" and "emotionally." Exhibit 10 (Police Officer Fred Kelly letter). A social worker recommended that Leif be given full and complete custody of his children, and the court followed this recommendation, over Leif's ex-wife's objection. Exhibit 11 (Veltkamp letter recommending Leif be given permanent custody of his children). Despite the court having given her liberal visitation rights, Leif's ex-wife "saw the girls very infrequently and played no role in their upbringing during this time." Exhibit 1 (Leif Halvorsen letter). Leif was thus left alone to raise their two children on a very low salary.

Leif "lived for his children." Exhibit 10 (Officer Fred Kelly letter). Remembering the time before her father went to prison, his oldest daughter recalls: "My father raised me alone. He did my hair, cooked for me and loved me when my mother did not." Exhibit 4 (Christin Halvorsen letter). However, the depression over the loss of the love of his life and the pressure of attempting to raise his children under these circumstances, while maintaining a demanding job and the

“shattering, heart wrenching experience” of dealing with his wife’s mental illness and then her abandonment of the family, (Exhibit 1 – Leif Halvorsen letter), became too much.

Leif tried very hard to raise his children as their sole provider. He did everything for them, feeding them, taking his one school-aged daughter to school, making sure she did her homework, and providing the other basic needs for his children. It became too much, though, for Leif to handle with the love of his life having abandoned him. Leif turned to drugs in an effort to cope and to deal with his depression.

Exhibit 3 (Deborah Mauldin letter). It was not long before this otherwise law-abiding citizen who had never before been in legal trouble began to experience severe addiction. The drugs started controlling Leif, and he knew it. Looking back on this time in his life, Leif wrote in 1999:

In the two years leading up to my conviction I became totally lost in my world, a world I had once been a very productive member of; I had lost everything that ever meant anything to me. My addiction to drugs resulted in my suffering from manic depression and bouts with psychosis, culminating in losing my family, my career, my house and my life as I knew it. Once I had been full of joy and life and hope and love; now there was only depression. I was empty and my whole life was shattered.

Exhibit 15 (Leif’s published article, entitled “Reclaiming Life on Death Row”).

Leif sought help, and checked himself into an inpatient rehabilitation center. Exhibit 1 (Leif Halvorsen letter) He was able to stay clean for a bit afterwards, but the pain, depression, and addiction was too strong. Exhibit 1 (Leif Halvorsen letter). Leif returned to the extensive use of drugs and alcohol, and lost his job as a result. He was, at most, a shell of the person he used to be.

Police Officer Fred Kelly, who had known Leif personally for years, saw Leif at that time and “was shocked to see him like that. It was not the Leif that [he] had known in years past.” Exhibit 10 (Police Officer Kelly letter). It was so difficult to see Leif deteriorate from a “talented, professional, intelligent man” whose “integrity” was “beyond reproach” and who had been making “a valuable contribution to society for all of his adult life” into a drug addict whose drug use “had taken over his life” that Police Officer Kelly “was struck by a feeling of sadness seeing him like

this.” Exhibit 10 (Police Officer Fred Kelly letter), A month or two later, under the influence of a massive number of drugs that render a person paranoid, Leif was involved in three murders committed at once in 1983. These murders occurred during a chaotic confrontation that ensued after one of the victims pulled a bayonet while Leif, his co-defendant, and the three murdered victims were all consuming massive quantities of narcotic drugs, including cocaine.

These circumstances may have made available a number of defenses at trial. But, Leif’s trial lawyer misunderstood the law and thus never developed or presented that information in any meaningful way. He admitted recently in an affidavit that he misunderstood the law at the time of the trial, and as a result presented no real defense at all to Leif’s crimes. Unfortunately, counsel’s admission came so late in the process that the courts have not to this point addressed the substance of that. Leif has now completed his federal habeas process, and requests, as he has desired now for decades, the opportunity to live out the rest of his life in prison so he can continue to dedicate that time to helping troubled youths and others to avoid the paths that led to him being sentenced to death while also continuing to defuse situations within the prison that could otherwise result in inmates acting violently towards staff and other inmates.

#### **Leif’s life after the crime**

“It was through [Leif’s] incarceration that he finally escaped his drug addiction.” Exhibit 3 (Deborah Mauldin letter). Once Leif became sober, the gravity of what he had done fully set in. For the more than thirty years he has spent in prison, the guilt and remorse Leif has felt for his crimes has been a driving force in his life. To continue to help his children, and others, better themselves, Leif realized he must better himself throughout his years in prison. He has done just that. “Leif has turned his life around and reclaimed himself.” Exhibit 7 (Catesby Clay letter).

### **A. Leif helps his children**

While in prison, Leif made his children a priority. He has stayed in touch with his two young children, who have visited him and who correspond with him regularly. Despite the fact that he is in prison, his daughters have independently described Leif as a major source of strength and positive guidance in their lives. His daughter Elizabet stated: “He is my number one support system; I do not have much of a support network, but my Dad is the support that keeps me going.” Exhibit 5 (Elizabet Ratliff letter). His Dad’s guidance and advice has helped her garner the strength to get out of an abusive relationship. Then, when her second (common-law) husband died, Elizabet used drugs to cope.

When she went to visit her dad in prison, he immediately recognized in his daughter what he had seen in himself years before, and spoke to her honestly about the importance of her quitting drugs not only for herself, but also for her children and for others. “Because of what my father said, I moved to get away from the drugs and people I was then associating with, and stopped using drugs. I have been clean of drugs ever since then. . . .” Exhibit 5 (Elizabet Ratliff letter). Despite the devastating results of his own interactions with the criminal justice system, Leif did not let that get in the way of providing the best advice regarding his granddaughter:

There was a time when my daughter had been charged with manufacturing meth and was on the run with her boyfriend. Dad convinced me that the only way to save my daughter was to turn her into the police. He told me that if I don’t turn my daughter into police and thus get away from the situation and get her the help she needed, she could easily ultimately end up where he is. My daughter is now in a substance abuse program and has stayed clean of drugs since then.

Exhibit 5 (Ratliff letter). Leif’s older daughter, Christin, echoes the same sentiment as Elizabet in terms of her father’s influence on her life: “My life has been full of losses and [my father] is the only family I have. He blames himself for my life’s pains and hardships because of where he is in his decisions but the truth is he is the one who has given me everything good inside myself.

Without my father's guidance and unwavering love, I would have lost myself years ago." Exhibit 4 (Christin Halvorsen letter).



Leif with his daughter, Elisabet



Leif with his daughter, Elisabet, and family



Leif with his daughter, Christin and her family

**B. Leif improves himself.**

While under a death sentence, Leif earned an Associate Degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management through the Northwood Institute, graduating summa cum laude with a 4.0 GPA, after demonstrating such good behavior at the prison that the Warden took the unusual step of allowing Leif to attend classes with the general prison population. Exhibit 12 (Northwood Institute Diploma); exhibit 13 (Northwood Institute Transcript). Leif then continued his education. He enrolled in a Bachelor's program in sociology at Murray State University, where he made the Dean's List and maintained a 4.0 GPA. Exhibit 14 (Murray State University Transcript). Leif did not just do this for himself. As he stated in 1999, "[b]esides benefiting me, my education allowed me to become more understanding of and empathetic with the world. I think too it aided in a further

integration of my mind, body and spirit. Drug addiction had damaged nerve ways in my body and mind and it's my belief that the mental stimulation of education helped promote healing of those pathways." Exhibit 15 (Leif's published article, entitled "Reclaiming Life on Death Row").

Throughout this process, Leif did everything he could to heal the wounds he felt he had created. "My family and I were able to share the pain and work through the resentment of the hardships and loss I had caused them through dialogue and action. In time we were able to reunite as a whole and to reciprocate love." Exhibit 15 (Leif's published article, entitled "Reclaiming Life on Death Row"). Leif was not only concerned with his own family's healing, he also wished to do anything possible to help the victims' families.

Leif "regrets and [has] sincere contrition for the crime he committed so many years ago, and "wishes he could be available to help the family he has touched with his crime." Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter). *Leif has long desired the opportunity to participate in reconciliation with the victims' family members so they could say what they would like to him and so Leif can try, as best he can, to help them heal as much as possible. Leif's frustration with his inability to find a mechanism through which he could effectively reach out to the victims of his crime led him to attempt to set up reconciliation with his victims' family members and create a model for a reconciliation program for death-sentenced inmates and their victims' family members. Though Leif has ultimately been unable to fully accomplish this, his desire to do so is testimony to his remorse.*

Leif's own words demonstrate his open-hearted understanding of the reconciliation process, and its value: "While healing, if any, for the perpetrator is secondary, healing for both the victim and perpetrator should be able to happen outside the grey areas that the criminal justice

system operates, and it should be of utmost importance for the victim.” Exhibit 15 (Leif’s published article, entitled “Reclaiming Life on Death Row”).

*Leif has since received a letter from a family member of one of the victims in which she forgave Leif* and told him about how she has gotten to know, and became a friend of, Leif’s older daughter, Christin. Exhibit 16 (Letter from victim family member). Leif responded with a powerful, heartfelt response that is attached. (Exhibit 17).

It is clear that Leif’s transformation in prison is neither artificial nor superficial, and certainly was not easy. Describing his own transformation, Leif wrote in 1999 in an article published in Mandala Magazine: “My years in prison have been spent reclaiming my life from the ashes of its ruins. When I arrived, I was still fighting addiction to drugs, in poor mental and physical health, my life reduced to a mere shadow of its 28 years. I had reached my lowest ebb.” Exhibit 15 at 2 (Leif’s published article, entitled “Reclaiming Life on Death Row”). However, during that time, Leif rediscovered his Catholic faith and enmeshed himself in that. He rediscovered the sacraments, while also studying other faith traditions and reading books by great spiritual writers. He does not credit himself for his transition, but rather God and the many people at the prison who reached out to him and showed him love and compassion:

One can only speculate where my journey in the land of Abandon All Hope would have led without [certain people]. It's apparent none of us can live without the help of countless others, alive or dead. Everything we have, not only material goods, but our ideas, our skills, our faith, our music and stories that give us courage, understanding and delight the heart- everything we have has been given us by others. . . . These people don't see us men as marginal but as a part of themselves.

Exhibit 15 (Leif’s published article, entitled “Reclaiming Life on Death Row”). Even *Warden Philip Parker acknowledged Leif’s transformation*, telling Leif that he believed he “has a talent for expressing [himself] with pen and paper in a positive way,” and describing Leif’s article as

“very thought provoking and inspirational.” Exhibit 19 (October 15, 1999 Memo from Warden Parker to Leif).

Leif has also always stood out to Dr. M. Douglas Clark, who first met Leif through prison ministry events and has continued to correspond with Leif for fifteen years after he stopped visiting the prisons regularly. Though he interacted with a very large number of prisoners through his prison ministry, from the beginning, Leif stood out as “personable, polite and not at all aggressive.” Exhibit 2 (Dr. Clark letter). This has not changed. In the more than 20 years Dr. Clark has been corresponding with Leif, he has never asked Dr. Clark for a single thing, and has never been the least bit bitter or angry about his own situation. He seems to truly be someone who has accepted his situation, accepted that his own actions brought him where he is, and who is doing all he can to make the best of it.” Exhibit 2 (Dr. Clark letter) At this point, Dr. Clark does not see Leif as an inmate, but rather corresponds with him as if he is a “brother or a son.” Exhibit 2 (Dr. Clark letter). He describes Leif as a man “of integrity and compassion. It is noticeable in his correspondence and his daily walk.” Exhibit 2 (Dr. Clark letter).

Leif’s sister commented that once free from his drug addiction and sober in prison, “Leif returned to being the person he was before . . . .” Exhibit 3 (Deborah Mauldin letter). Yet, Leif’s own writings and interaction with others reflects that Leif is not just that person – he has grown and developed into someone who not only “loved animals” and tried to take care of them as his sister had known him to do as a child, but also someone who is a highly personable, deeply spiritual, compellingly insightful person who continues to do everything he can to learn and grow to be the best person he can be.

### **C. Leif helps others both inside and outside of the prison**

The same sentiment expressed in his memos to Leif is what inspired Warden Parker to allow Leif to be the *only death row prisoner in the history of the Kentucky Department of Corrections to be permitted to participate in the Department's "Youth Awareness Program."* The program brought at-risk youth to the Kentucky State Penitentiary to meet with inmates who would explain their lives and offer the youth advice in an effort to expose them to the cruel reality of prison life while simultaneously instilling confidence and hope that they could amount to something in life and could still turn their lives around. Leif was very passionate about the need for young people to avoid drugs and alcohol. He wrote a letter about his life and how drugs and alcohol put at-risk individuals even more at risk, which he sent to a teacher of children with emotional disturbances in an effort to help those children turn their lives around. Leif also cited this passion when seeking permission from the Warden to participate in the Youth Awareness program.

For security reasons, the Kentucky State Penitentiary did not normally permit death-sentenced inmates to serve on the panel. But, after hearing Leif speak to "Leadership Kentucky," about what programs might help prevent future generations from ending up in prison (Exhibit 22 - Memo from prison Program Director Patti Treat to Leif), *Warden Parker concluded that Leif's "wisdom" and "comments to youth would add a new dimension to the [Youth Awareness] program."* Exhibit 20 (December 21, 2001 Memo from Warden Parker to Leif). He therefore made an exception for Leif, making him the first and only death-sentenced inmate to serve as a panel member of the "Youth Awareness Program." Exhibit 20 (December 21, 2001 Memo from Warden Parker to Leif). As it turned out, Warden Parker was certainly glad he allowed Leif to participate

with this program. Through his participation on the panel, Leif “changed a life.” Exhibit 21 (Memo from prison CTO Kellie Oliver to Leif) – actually, he changed many lives.

*The program was “truly a life defining moment to many of [the] students.” Exhibit 23 (Letter from Kathy Adams, Director of Lake P.R.I.D.E. Center). It was life-saving, as at least two students have said. Exhibit 24 (Letter from Lake Pride Student); exhibit 25 (Letter from high school student). According to one student, “if I hadn’t come and talk to yall (sic) I don’t think my life would have ever change[d].” Exhibit 26 (Letter from Calloway High School Student). William, another student in the program, said Leif “changed the way I see life.” Exhibit 27 (Letter from student William). Justin, after hearing Leif speak, decided to enter a drug rehab class. Exhibit 28 (Letter from student Justin). Another student wrote Leif that what Leif said, “chang[ed] me and ma[de] my life so much better.” Exhibit 29 (Letter from Lake Pride Student). Matt R, according to his teacher, worked very hard to improve his behavior after hearing Leif speak. Exhibit 30 (Letter from student Matt R.). It is an understatement to say Leif was only an inspiration to these youth. Leif was more than that.*

He was a teacher. He “help[ed] send [students] in the right direction.” Exhibit 31 (Letter from student Dillon H.). He made students “think twice about [their] li[ves] and [their] mistakes and choices [they] made” and made students “think about what [they are] going to do with [their] li[ves].” Exhibit 32 (Letter from student). One student told Leif in a letter, “Your story really opened my eyes. I think about it every time I question using or letting something like that control me again. Listening to your story made me realize that if I don’t change something about my life I could end up somewhere close to where you are now.” Exhibit 33 (Letter from student). Another student noted that “[a]fter the prison trip, I was continually put in positions where I could easily make a bad decision. Every time though, the thing that would pop into my head would be the

memory of the day we went to Eddyville prison and what the inmates said that made such a positive impact on my life. Exhibit 34 (Letter from student). Leif helped another youth realize that “I can change before it is too late and now I want to change.” Exhibit 31 (Letter from student Dillon H.). “Before I came to see ya’ll (sic), I planned on quitting school and just getting my GED, now I am going to finish school, graduate with my class and enjoy my school year.” Exhibit 35 (Letter from high school student). Inspired by Leif, another student turned his academic performance around, “got on honor roll, making straight A’s” and was then able to “go[] to college in the fall.” Exhibit 36 (Letter from Lake Pride student).

This pattern of positive influence has persisted the entire time Leif has participated in the Youth Awareness Program. Another student was failing classes, only for that to change after speaking to Leif. Exhibit 37 (Letter from student). Another student was so inspired that he “started trying in school and to stay in school” and planned to attend “West Kentucky Community College.” Exhibit 38 (Letter from student). Another student “wanted to change” his life so much and help others so badly after speaking to Leif that he “joined the Army National Guard.” Exhibit 39 (Letter from Lake Pride student).

Each of these students’ lives, and the lives of so many more, were changed forever in a positive way that allowed the students to save their own futures while starting to embark on a path to help others. Leif’s impact cannot be described any better than one of the students said it: “what you all are doing is why god put you here, not to take those lives or to do drugs, but to help people.” Exhibit 40 (Letter from student).

Leif seems to be a natural when it comes to helping children and young adults, and parents. As a teacher and writer who has gotten to know Leif over the years stated, “I often imagine Leif working as a counselor in some capacity, working as a mentor to troubled youth or with inmates

who have given up on themselves or on life in general.” Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter). As amazing as his work has been in this regard, it is not even close to all Leif has done from prison walls to help others.

*Leif also organized efforts on death row to raise money to support poverty stricken and critically ill children. His work was so successful that the prison gave Leif a certificate “for outstanding performance and lasting contribution on helping to support the betterment of disadvantaged children and youth at risk.”* Exhibit 41 (Certificate of participation in “Children’s Fund Project).

Leif’s efforts to help people have reached far beyond youth brought to the prison to meet with him and his efforts to raise money poverty stricken and ill children. Leif has also helped people in a more individual way, including Gloria Nixon-John. While Gloria has many friends, “few [] seem to understand and commiserate to the degree that Leif does.” Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter). For example, Leif has helped Glorida deal with her daughter’s Tourette’s Syndrome. In her own words, “Leif often reminds me of [my daughter’s] talents and suggestions for her possible employment. He suggested that her ability with the technology combined with her drawing and painting skills might lead her to a job working in web design or graphic design.” Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter). Leif’s kindness, insight, and advice, led Gloria “to embrace her [daughter’s] difficulties and focus on her gifts and the things she is able to do successfully. He reminds me to take one day at a time, and to celebrate the little successes my daughter has. He finds articles about treatment available to those with her condition and sends them my way. He does this with sincere concern and grace.” Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter). And, “[a]s a result of [Leif’s] insight and perspective,” Gloria’s “depressions over this situation has lifted.” Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter).

While in prison, Leif also got to know Julia Ricketts when she was a teenager and has stayed in touch with her ever since. “Because of Leif’s influence, [Julia] backed away from the youth in [her] neighborhood who were dabbling in drugs and alcohol.” Exhibit 8 (Julia Ricketts letter). Julia is now one of the court clerks for the United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, Louisville Division.

Leif has not just been a positive influence to those outside of prison; he has also consistently made a significant difference to the lives of his fellow inmates and the prison staff. With regard to other inmates, Leif “seems to delight in being able to help them within the parameters available to him. When other inmates are ill or distraught, he expresses a sincere empathy with them” and “help[s] them find a meaningful way to contribute while incarcerated.” Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter). Leif also helped an inmate who could not read or write much. The inmate dictated the letters to Leif and Leif would then write the letters for the inmate. Exhibit 3 (Deborah Mauldin letter). Leif also helped Harold McQueen find religion and become Catholic before his execution. (Exhibit 3 (Deobrah Mauldin letter).

Leif has also used his intelligence, thoughtfulness, and eloquence to bridge the gap between inmates, prison staff, and leaders outside of the prison. When the prison made changes to policies, Leif would explain those changes to others on death row in an effort to keep them from getting angry and possibly acting out in general or in a violent manner that could have harmed other inmates or prison staff. Exhibit 3 (Deborah Mauldin letter). These are just a few examples of how Leif has made a positive difference to the inmates and prison guards at the Kentucky State Penitentiary.

Leif’s prison record and correspondence indicate that he is a model of good behavior and efforts at self-improvement. He gets along well with guards and with others. Role models like Leif

are important to have in prison because they influence other inmates. Even if Leif were in prison for the rest of his life, he would be a powerful influence in making a potentially very dangerous place safer for both inmates and staff alike.

*Leif "is a positive force behind prison walls, whose impact is felt by countless individuals who have benefited from his ability to articulate and counsel."* Exhibit 7 (Catesby Clay letter). He "has a soft manner, a kindness that is palpable, and a sincerity that [one] seldom[s] find out in the world." Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter). Leif regularly lends a "compassionate ear" to those in need and is "quick to answer [people] with suggestions that are both insightful and thoughtful." Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter). Leif will continue to help people if given a chance. He will continue to counsel people to avoid the pitfalls that led to their downfall, to instill confidence in those who need it to believe they can amount to anything in the world, and to point out the value of life to those who are wasting it today. He will continue to improve himself and be a positive force in the lives of his family, as well as importantly in the lives of other prisoners and in the prison community. *Many lives will be affected positively if Leif lives.*

Three lives were taken in a horrible and tragic crime more than thirty-two years ago that forever changed the lives of three families. There is no denying that. Leif does not want to. It is a reality that he has to live with for the rest of his life. He cannot change the past. He cannot take back the tragic events of that day, even though he would give anything to be able to do so. Leif, though, can change the future, as he has been doing now for more than thirty years. *He can influence the lives of others for the rest of his natural life, and by doing so improve the community as a whole. "A gaping hole in this regard would exist if Leif is executed that would cause much trauma to those who have gotten to know Leif well over the years while resulting in many people*

*whom he could, and does, help be a better person and deal with the obstacles that life deals them, not receiving help and compassion they need.” Exhibit 6 (Gloria Nixon-John letter).*

The question is therefore not whether Leif remaining in prison will cause any harm or will do a disservice to society in comparison to execution. It won't. Leif has had an exemplary prison record for approximately a quarter century, with only minor infractions not long after he arrived on death row and nothing in more than twenty years. The question is also not if Leif's speaking and writing abilities will result in troubled youth, family members, inmates, and others receiving guidance, support, and counseling they need so that they move forward in a positive manner and turn their lives around when their lives have gone down a trajectory that necessitates change. We already know it has and will in the future.

*The appropriate question is therefore how many lives Leif will turn around, how many people he will help overcome depression and other traumatic events in their lives, how many people he will help become better people, and how many people he can truly impact in a positive manner if granted clemency. The possibility is enormous. So, you must ask yourself whether retribution, revenge, and punishment (all of which are diminished in value because Leif is not the person he was when he committed the murders) is worth more than the enormous good Leif has done and can continue to do for youth and adults alike, by inspiring them and guiding them through difficult and often traumatic events in their lives and to avoid a life of drugs, alcohol, and other scenarios that could otherwise result in them landing in prison.*

*The answer should be simple. Lives will be reclaimed, or at least improved in a significant way, if Leif's sentence is commuted to less than the death penalty. With Leif having changed his life in such a monumental way while in prison and with his unique ability (and desire) to*

communicate in a way that positively changes, and influences, the lives of others, it is clear that what Leif can accomplish alive outweighs retribution, revenge, and punishment.

Governor Bevin, you should therefore say “yes” to life and commute Leif’s death sentence so he can continue for the rest of his natural life guiding others on how to, and why to, avoid turning to drugs and alcohol,, and counsel, advise, support, and influence those who have suffered difficult, depressing, or traumatic events in their life, so they can cope with those circumstances, be better able to overcome those obstacles, and become better people, just as have Gloria Nixon-John, Julia Ricketts, and many of the youth Leif has met with, and influenced, over the years.

Respectfully submitted,



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