

Written Statement

Greetings everyone. My name is Bryant Brim. Thank you for this chance to tell my story.

I served 26 years of a life sentence in federal prison for a non-violent drug conviction.

In 1993, I was 32 years old, living in Los Angeles. I was caught up in a house that was being used as a PCP lab. Investigators got a call from a chemical company, saying that I was buying large amounts of the chemicals that went into making PCP. They followed me back to a house, and watched me unload the chemicals into the garage. They got warrants for the house, and searched it, and found a PCP lab.

I went to trial with life on the line. I learned later that the government had offered me a twenty year mandatory minimum. My trial attorney has admitted he never showed me the offer before it expired.

At the time, I saw PCP as an easy way to make money for my family. I didn't intend to hurt anyone. My dad had been shot in a drive-by shooting. My family needed my help. I had three children by that time, and they needed my support. But the Court couldn't consider that at the time of sentencing. My sentence was life.

When I went to prison, I didn't have a release date, but I never gave up that someday I might be released. I knew being bitter was going to kill me. My family's love and support pushed me during my incarceration to never give up. It kept me focusing in a positive manner, because all I ever wanted was to experience happiness with my family.

I focused on a few different things. One was classes. I constantly placed myself in classes, sometimes more than once. I learned about subjects like Native American History and took Spanish. If they changed the class, I took it again to see what new things I could learn. In 2007, I got my GED. I tried to focus on rehabilitation and staying positive, taking classes on life skills and parenting. I took classes on nutrition and health. I took computer classes so I would be ready, if I ever got released.

Another was the law library. I keep working and studying, trying to figure out how I could free myself. I knew nobody was going to get me out of custody, that I had to figure that out for myself. During rec time in prison, most people went straight to the yard and I always went straight to the law library. I made friends with the workers in the law library and learned as much as I could about my case.

One thing that served me well in prison is that I could get along with just about anybody. I stayed away from drama. I tried to avoid some of the toxic dynamics in prison around race and geography. We're all people, and if you were good people, we could be friends. If you were stirring up trouble, I kept my head down and stayed away.

But my family was what kept me strong minded and mentally disciplined. When I was sentenced to life in prison, my family did those years with me. My wife was the sole provider for my family and even though her life was affected by my actions, she maintained

hope that one day I would come home. My kids grew up, my parents aged, and throughout, we kept strong family bonds. They visited when they could. My mom, my kids, and even grandkids came to visit me in custody. I exchanged letters with my grandkids, so that I could continue to be a part of their lives.

In 2020, I had been in prison for 25 years. I was 59 years old. I was the only one from my case who was still in prison: One codefendant had his case dismissed after cooperating with the government, and my other codefendant was released after serving 11 years in 2004. But I was still in. I was passed up for clemency, and my pleadings weren't getting me anywhere.

But still I kept hope. Other people in prison called me the "old man around here." I had good relationships with the COs, who trusted me to do work other people weren't trusted to do. I tried to help the younger guys. I would try to share what I learned in the law library, helping guys to get detainers lifted so they could get into RDAP. And I tried to help them focus on staying positive.

But things were tough for me. Specifically my mom. My mom was 87 years old. She has heart disease and has suffered strokes. She was essentially house bound, and because she is partially-blind and partially-paralyzed, she depended on family for daily care including bathing, medication, and food. My family did its best, but it was hard. My mom's main caretaker was my brother "E". E is a chronic alcoholic who was in bad shape and his drinking grew worse during the pandemic. Sometimes he would get locked up in jail for a day or two, leaving my mom on her own. Other times, his own health issues would keep him away for days. When he was around, his idea of feeding mom was just to stop off at Popeyes and get her some fried chicken. It was not good for her heart. Other family members did their best to pitch in, but I heard from them inside how bad it was with E looking after her. My mom was not staying hydrated and wasn't keeping up on her medication. I would call home and learn that my mom collapsed and was taken to the hospital or that my brother was arrested again.



Something else happened in 2020: COVID. I got COVID while I was in Herlong. I was sick for about ten days in March 2020. My cellmate and I tried to treat ourselves with cough drops and ibuprofen. I continued to cough and have difficulty sleeping and breathing,

and fatigue for months. It was also hard when my family members on the outside got COVID and I was especially worried about my mom getting it, especially with my brother E coming in and out of the house.

But another thing happened in 2020. I started seeing cases in the law library saying that maybe people might qualify for compassionate release, even though we weren't over 65 or terminally ill. I started working with an attorney, and in November 2020, we filed a motion asking the Court to let me go home. We told the Court about my long sentence for a nonviolent crime, about my mom's poor health, about my programs and certificates in prison, and the effects of COVID in prison.

On February 23, 2021, almost exactly two years ago today, I sat on a telephonic hearing with my attorney and the judge. The judge asked the government what good it did to keep me in jail. All the prosecutor could talk about was what happened twenty five years ago when I was arrested. But the judge looked at all I had accomplished, the work I had done on myself in custody. At the end, he said he was letting me go time served.

Since I've been out, my life is my family. My mom is a different person. I get up in the morning and take my mom her breakfast. I make sure she takes her medication. I take her to doctors appointments, or sometimes just out driving, because she doesn't get out of the house much. I bring her healthy meals for lunch and make sure she is drinking water



Her doctors report her blood pressure is excellent and while she has had a few health scares, she is stable.

I have also tried to be back in my children's and grandchildren's lives. I attend birthday parties and sporting events. They say one of my grandkid has an event for elementary school, and I'm there. I attend weekly therapy to help in the transition from doing 25 years in prison.



I also try to help in my community. I participate in my church's food bank, giving out turkeys and hams and food boxes to the community. I volunteer with a tutoring program in Watts--the neighborhood I grew up in. I am also a community ambassador in Watts where I work to reduce gang violence and provide safety to my community. I attend community events on behalf of the organization and participate in community events like breast cancer walks or food drives.

I am so grateful for this second chance. I'm glad the Court got to look at me as a whole--the things that led me to prison, the way the laws have changed, the way that I

spent my time in prison, and the way I would spend my time if I was released. There are a lot of guys I was with who are still inside, people who, if they are released, would come out and help their family and their communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story. I look forward to speaking with the Commission soon.