

In God's name  
The Merciful Benefactor, The Merciful Redeemer

February 2010

Dear Mr. President,

It is with the utmost respect that I am writing you this letter. My only wish is that it were under better circumstances. My name is Hamedah Hasan. I am a 42 year old mother and grandmother currently serving my 17<sup>th</sup> year into a 27 year federal prison sentence for crack cocaine related offenses. I am a first time, non-violent offender, and I am asking you to exercise your executive authority and commute the remaining six years of my sentence. As the law currently stands, I have no other legal recourse.

When I was 21 years old I found myself in a horridly abusive relationship with a man whom at one point I loved more than my own self. My self-esteem, as I now understand, was non-existent. In my heart I knew that wasn't what I wanted for myself and my two daughters, one to whom I had given birth at age 16. I was ashamed of everything my life had evolved to entail, and at a loss for how to find my way back to a positive place. A place free of being intimidated, cursed, slapped, punched, kicked and feeling run-down. A place of mental and physical peace.

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In seeking such a place I accepted an offer to leave my home town and move in with my older cousin who sold crack cocaine. I accepted without any plan other than to escape the violent wrath of my ex-boyfriend and father to my second child. With the exception of being abused, my continued misguided sense of loyalty lead me directly "from the frying pan into the fire." It wasn't long before I was asked and began performing tasks related to the drug operation.

Despite a degree of influence, I was not forced to do anything related to my cousin's drug ring. I accept full responsibility for my criminal actions. At the time I erroneously believed I had to perform those tasks to show my gratitude in exchange for a safe place. I am in no way proud of my past bad choices which have painfully affected the lives of my entire family. However, I am proud of the woman I have grown to be.

During my incarceration I have taken long, hard looks at myself. I've done everything within my power to redeem myself for my past transgressions by learning and demonstrating what it means to be a community asset versus a liability. I am free of disciplinary infractions, work a regular work detail,

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and enjoy being productive. I attend weekly Islamic services, and interact with Chaplains regarding Muslim inmate affairs. I continue to build upon my relationships with God, Self and Others by participating in a Bureau of Prisons Spiritual Growth program. I give back by mentoring girls ages 11-17 in the local community.

Next to nourishing my relationship with God through prayer, study and practice of the Islamic religion, my primary focus has always been maintaining a healthy bond with my daughters. Fifteen minute phone calls, the United States Postal Service, and approximately one dozen visits in nearly 17 years didn't leave much to work with in the way of parenting. My daughters Kasandra, Ayesha and Kamya are ages 26, 21, and 16 respectively. Kasandra and Ayesha are single mothers who work, take vocational courses and maintain their own households all while helping with their younger sister and my chronically ill mother. I am very proud of my daughters and their sense of responsibility. I also know my physical presence and familial contribution would be of great benefit to them. I love my family and need them just as much as they need me.

Through the many storms of my legal

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battle, I have never lost hope that one day justice will finally prevail. Two different federal judges have reduced my sentence to 12 years, giving me a 2003 release date, only to subsequently re-sentence me to 27 years. June 19, 2009 I was able to tell my youngest daughter Kamyra, to whom I had given birth in prison, that for the first time in her life she was going to have a hands on mother. I'm sure you could imagine the sense of joy that news brought to both her and her sisters who were 9 and 4 when I left them. Equal to nothing, the hardest thing I've ever had to do in my entire life was to call my children five days later to tell them the judge changed her mind.

I dream of one day leaving prison to live a normal life as a productive, contributing member of society. My dreams and goals include starting and running an organization in my community assisting and empowering children with incarcerated parents. I plan and hope to achieve this with focus on three specific areas: providing visiting opportunities to area prisons, age appropriate youth empowerment curriculums for children ages 6-17, and community resource services for caregivers with special needs. Parenting my daughters from prison, sharing experiences with other incarcerated mothers, and participating in youth outreach

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have kept me closely related to the unique challenges faced by children who have incarcerated parents. My desire to help in my community and my passion to deter young people from following my own rocky path are two major factors that keep me focused on a positive, productive post-release life.

I am under no illusion that my goals will manifest without serious work and commitment. When looking at the jobs I've had in prison, the degree of responsibility, and the competence in which I have performed my duties, I feel a great sense of confidence in my ability to achieve my goals. I have completed a paralegal certificate program and several credit and non-credit college courses. I've outlined an organizational business plan, and I'm independently studying how to start and run a non-profit. I have outlined specific steps and continue to ponder ideas to increase my likelihood of success.

I am not a danger to society. I've spent over 10 of the past 16+ years being housed in a minimum security prison camp without a perimeter fence. I've worked a year on a community work detail with minimal supervision, and been allowed to go into the community to do youth outreach and mentoring. My intention is in no way

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to diminish the seriousness of my past criminal actions or to deflect responsibility, but to simply ask for a second chance.

Mr. President my release date from prison is November 18, 2016; I humbly implore you to ask yourself when considering my request for clemency if incarcerating a non-violent, first time offender for 23 1/2 years to the 25 lived prior to incarceration is truly justice served. From everything I have observed, I believe you are a compassionate and just man. I pray that you recognize my redeeming qualities, see my 27 year sentence as excessive, and grant my family and I our long awaited reunion.

May God's wisdom be upon your decision making process, and may His peace, mercy, guidance, protection, forgiveness, and blessings be upon you and your family.

Sincerely,

Hamedah Hasan