

Your Honorable Chief Judge Kimberly Mueller,

I write to you as a man who lost his way, a man who up to 2017 led a law abiding, ethically guided and morally founded life. I raised my son from 3 years old through adulthood as a single parent with little to no involvement from his mother. I was the sole source of income and parental support. I learned very quickly that I enjoyed fatherhood. Although my father's methods could sometimes be physically or mentally abusive, it was not without cause or foundation, and ultimately, represented core guiding principles critical to the ongoing continuity of our society. I chose not to employ the militaristic methods of my father and was able to raise a very respectful, well behaved, intelligent, contributing member to society.

Where I would normally feel pride in saying I am a good man, a man of morality, ethics, and justice, after committing the crimes I perpetrated, I only feel the shame I brought upon myself and the betrayal to my core beliefs, my family, my partners, my community, and my country, in a time of National Crisis. I blame nobody but myself. I am extremely remorseful for my actions and am ashamed and hurt knowing that I have hurt people that trusted me and who had looked up to me or counted on me. I did not plan to destroy years of trust and hard work.

The intent in the crimes I committed was an act of desperation, a failure in my character, in my choices. Knowing all well the consequences of my actions I still chose to pursue those choices that led me here.

I dealt with the unfairness of the situation and had no intention whatsoever of taking money I was not authorized to take until a major life change took place in February 2017. This major event and change in my life began when I chose to start a relationship with a friend of, at that time 8 years, Rhonda Morton. I had a fairly close friendship with her throughout the 8 years trying my best to be supportive of her as a friend with the abuse she was suffering from husband at that time, at the same time keeping a friendship only so as not to upset my situation or hers or make her situation worse due to the fact that her husband was a violent Norteño gang member and violent retribution was feared if it should ever even be assumed that we were engaging in a relationship.

Unbeknownst to me throughout the years of physical and mental abuse, compounded with Borderline Personality Disorder, Major Manic Depressive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder all complicated by many traumatic sexual, physical, and emotional events throughout her childhood, Rhonda had developed an Alcohol and Methamphetamine dependency. At the time of our conception of the relationship in February I was not aware of Rhonda's drug use or alcohol dependency. I was elated, in love, finally in a relationship with someone I had wanted to be with since I met and who had felt and did feel the same way about me. Someone who shared the same dreams, same views on family life and children, and lifestyle, or so I had thought.

By the time I was aware of Rhonda's alcohol and drug dependency I was deeply in love and committed to Rhonda and I could not in good conscious just turn my back and leave her because of her alcohol problem. She needed help and someone to care and love her and believe in her. I believed I could be her hero and she believed I could be her hero. And it did begin to go that way until the symptoms of the Borderline Personality Disorder and Bipolar coupled with the drug and

alcohol dependency; the eminent fear of abandonment and pain fueling paranoia, anger, rage, fighting, more alcohol and more drugs. I chose to stay with Rhonda despite these issues. I chose to stay and fight with her rather than leave and worry about my own life. I knew a fight of this nature would not come without its consequences and there would be a heavy toll possibly even end with her hating me when I was only trying to help.

On a personal level I felt as if I was cursed to be around. It had destroyed my family, my fathers drinking driving my parents to divorce and then again later my mother's second husband and his drinking problem nearly leading to my mother's suicide and downward spiraling depression. I had seen Alcohol win too many times, destroy too many families and friends. What I didn't see is the true, raw, personal nature of Alcoholism. I fortunately despise the taste of Alcohol and do not like the effects that come along with it and do not drink at all. The close personal attached nature of our relationship spewed her emotional dysregulation, rage, and years and years of trauma unchecked without therapy, no recognition of potential psychological causes, no recognition of personal responsibility, causing a huge chaotic reciprocating nightly theme of being accused, projected, ridiculed, bullied, argued with, one moment I am her idol and the next moment I am the devil.

I was kept up all night long trying to calm an Alcoholic down from raging over the slightest things, even a thought, misheard conversation, or something that was a complete fabrication of the mind and paranoia common with the use, particularly the inhalation of methamphetamine. I was still working every day, many long hours, being kept up all night, receiving calls at work yelling and accusing me of things. Everything was beginning to get so far beyond any stressful situation I have ever encountered in my life. I had never loved someone so much but at the same time, never in my life been treated so badly and hurt so badly by someone. I knew that wasn't my friend, that wasn't who she was, she didn't want to be like that, she just wanted a chance at a normal life, it was the Alcohol and Drugs, they had taken over her mind and body and were taking their toll on her health mentally and physically.

Unfortunately, the stress of the relationship, some infidelity on her part, the chaos of her moving people into my house against my wishes, doing things against my wishes, arguing, and throwing alcoholic tantrums until she got her way, blowing all of my money on her friends and family, excessively wasting food, and giving everything of mine and that I bought her away and then complaining she had nothing. To make matters worse in my own mind, my confidence and ego were shattered, I was allowing it all to happen when I could have just left... At that time, I had my reasons for allowing it, thinking it would show her someone was willing to trust and believe in her and stand strong through her mistakes and truly not abandon them. I expected to recognition of some authority on her part and her not having to ask me for anything to be empowering and develop trust, but instead it only made things worse, and she still complained that I controlled her when in fact I did not try to control her in any way. I knew it was in her nature, particularly at that time in her life to get what she wanted by any means. Because I knew if I didn't give it to her, she would get it from someone else. That was a fatal error in my thinking process, I was only slipping myself into a relationship of codependency with and alcoholic and drug user.

When the sleepless nights, fighting, embarrassment, fear, anger, confusion, hurt, pain accumulated along with all of the stress and worries I was experiencing at work, especially given the drop in my performance due to sleepless nights and constant drama and or fear of drama, and my money was very quickly depleting I chose to snort methamphetamine one evening with one of her friends she brought around my house, pouring my heart and troubles out to them while they offered me a line saying just one line won't hurt, it will help you relax. I had done drugs a few times in my youth and thought I could handle the temptation to continue using such a drug. I was very wrong and did it again a few nights later, and then a night later, and then daily. It was my choice to do it and I continued to do it because it made dealing with the fighting and drama and sleepless nights bearable. It made it so I could deal with the fighting and drama and still go to work the next day just to come home to more drama. It made it easier to deal with the fact that I chose to stay with someone who cheated on me. It made it easier to deal with the fact that I was letting an Alcoholic run all over me and destroy my house and my career. It made it easier to deal with the poor choices I made.

Soon my drug use became apparent to my partners, and I was asked to take a drug test. I agreed and took a drug test which came up positive for methamphetamine. I explained the situation I was into the owner's son and he was unusually understanding and talked his father into giving me another chance. From that point on I was treated very poorly by the son and I began to feel depressed and angry and began using more and more methamphetamine. Money soon began to run very low with the last of my life savings being spent on my Wife's father's funeral.

After my Father-In-Law's funeral my wife's twin sister Laura came to live with us to mourn her father and that turned into a chaotic emotional nightmare with constant fighting and drama. I was using methamphetamine daily just to cope with all the stress and the fact that I felt terrible with what I had done. I continued writing invoices and paying them to fill the sinking hole of money I was making by allowing it to be spent and wasting it fruitlessly gambling, which prior to my drug use I would never go to a casino, being an Accountant I know the statistics. But the drug use, depression, self-sabotage, shame, guilt, stress, fear, fighting, and stress of a relationship and dealing with the daily and nightly alcoholic outbursts it became the only moments of calm and escape I had.

Having been using the drug now for a little over two years, I was still working with my partners and the Pandemic hit. In my drug induced delusion I justified applying for a PPP loan in the fact that I could use the money to make money with crypto mining or another business opportunity and pay back the loan and also pay back the money I was not authorized to invoice and pay from my partners. Because of the sheer number of businesses applying for PPP loans and my own mental cognition issues caused by the methamphetamine use, It was difficult to maintain deadlines. Because of that I applied for multiple loans using them as backup loans in case one did not come through. My intention was not to apply for multiple loans and make a big grab for money. I applied for multiple loans out of fear that my loan application may slip through, or not get in to underwriting or approved in time; or as in one situation the bank that received the PPP deposit froze my bank account leaving me with no money not even my personal money and I chose to apply for another loan.

By the time all the damage was done I had accumulated quite a few loans and through my drug induced delusion and cognitive impairment I had lost complete track of the financial situation I had put myself in. Again, still under the delusion that they were just loans and if I wasn't able to pay it back it would be a civil issue. Again, not a justification, but a delusional premise that I conjured in my three-year drugged haze. This three-year haze came to an abrupt end when after numerous near death incidents with my wife's health due to complications from the consumption of alcohol and the sum of my shame and guilt and disappointment in myself and others we both decided to do the right thing and work together to pull ourselves out of the hole I dug us into before we lost everything. My wife was not aware of any of the financial dealings whatsoever, I purposely omitted any financial knowledge to her because I did not want her to be an accessory or get wrapped up in any legal issues with the choices I made.

In October 2021 my wife and I began attending outpatient rehabilitation, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, and counseling. Along with eating healthy, abstaining from drug use, and cutting all ties with anyone we knew or know that uses drugs or alcohol. We have both been clean and sober since October of 2021 and we both are very sure we will never go back to using drugs ever again. Ultimately throughout the entire 3-4 years of my marriage to Rhonda, I have helped her through some very terrible times. When Rhonda began a relationship with me, she made a dead halt in her fast-paced nomadic free living chaotic lifestyle to being home, not being abused, not knowing what to expect, and left to face herself and the choices and situations she has gone through in her life. I can honestly say I have never in my life met someone who has gone through so much trauma, with a terrible childhood where she was molested and hurt by her own family and people, she trusted to one of her exes that tried to kill her and ended up committing suicide by cop right in front of her. The emotional trauma she has experienced alone is a testament to her strength and will to live.

In going through all this and since our sobriety Rhonda has begun learning about herself, learning to love herself, learning that she doesn't need anyone but herself and she has gained a lot more independence than she has ever had before. Her ex-husband kept her in the house and sheltered her and would not allow her to get a driver's license, go to school, or get a job. She is now enrolled in nursing school, starting her own business cleaning homes, studying for her driver's license. I also enrolled in school to pursue my Bachelor's Degree in Data Analytics and have recently been hired with two jobs working for different companies in a remote home office capacity as a 3D Cad Designer and Product Designer.

This has all been a preface for the question I am about to ask you. Your honor, I am a humble man. I know the difference between right and wrong, I am eager to redeem myself not only in my own eyes but those of my family, peers, and community. I have no excuse for what I did and I am deserving of any punishment you and or the courts in your wisdom and experience set forth. I will accept your decision with respect and without resistance of any nature and I will make the best of any sentence set forth to improve myself and make a positive lasting impact on those around me.

I am not sure if I am deserving of leniency, but I know my wife and our children are deserving of it. I say that because this is a critical situation that my family is now facing and of no fault of

anyone but myself. If I did not have family who depend on me, depend on me for their emotional and physical wellbeing, I would take my sentence without request or deviation. However, as I said my family is in a critical situation. My wife as I stated has been diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder, Major Manic Depressive Disorder, and Bipolar Disorder. She has been admitted to the mental hospital on a few occasions and was officially diagnosed by a medical professional. Her mother and father have both passed away, what remains of her family are drug users and nothing but bad news.

My wife has nobody to turn to. No friends, no family, no driver's license, no formal education, no job experience. She was never given the chance to get those things before and now after all she has worked through, I would dare say comparable to many years of intensive psychotherapy, sure will power, strength, and a desire to be an upstanding member of our community. Neither my wife or myself are affluent, we have no life saving for her to pull from to support herself during my incarceration. These circumstances will undoubtedly halter any progress she has made and more likely than not send her spiraling in a depression and back to using drugs and alcohol or taking on a subcultural lifestyle in order to survive. My wife and I went through nearly four years of intense arguing, fighting, communicating, and getting to trust and know each other. I went through what to me was one of the most challenging events in my entire life. So much was sacrificed, so much time, so much life, so much heart to have it all fall apart would do no service to my wife, our children, our family, or the community. My wife also has legal shared custody of her underage children who depend on us in so facto depend on me and without me and their mother and a safe home to live in they risk falling into the abysmal gang culture that is prominent where they would have to live with their father.

Compounding matter further my wife has a twin sister who also experienced a lot of traumas through life and who is also experiencing mental health issues. However, her mental health issues are of an entirely different caliber. She has been diagnosed with Bipolar Schizoaffective Disorder bordering diagnosis of Schizophrenia. She has audio and visual hallucinations, delusions, talk obsessively to demons, yelling and sometimes screaming vulgar obscenities, and marked as gravely disabled and unable to take care of herself by a medical professional. She like my wife has no family or friends to care for her and my incarceration would inevitably preclude her spiral to the streets, drug use, and a terrible existence with no chance of pursuing any realm of normalcy in her life.

My incarceration will negatively impact and endanger the lives and wellbeing of my wife, my sister-in-law, and our children. I accept that if that is the way things proceed than that is of my own doing and nobody's fault but my own. They depend on me for more than just food and shelter, I have become a beacon of trust and stability and hope to them. A positive influence on her children. A glue that has held us together and allowed my wife and her children the freedom of independence. I have been a good stepfather in always talking with them, taking interest in what they were interested in and reinforced their interests by whatever means I could provide.

I thank you for your patience and in you taking the time to read so much when you have such a heavy caseload and so much more important matters to attend to. I feel ashamed to even be taking your precious time away from more critical human matters to deal with my negligence

and poor decisions. I do not want to waste any more time or money of the people of this great country, I have already unfairly and unjustly taken from my friends, neighbors, and community. I have complied and assisted honestly and forthright with the FBI, the prosecutor's office, the court and those involved by any means possible to reduce the time and resources that my actions have taken away from potentially more critical matters in our society. I am truly sorry for all the time, money, and energy I have wasted of all the people and organizations involved with the investigation and prosecution of the crimes I committed. Truly sorry to all those that trusted me. Truly sorry to my neighbors, my peers, our public servicemen and servicewomen, government officials, our forefathers, and to our amazing country I am blessed to born into.

Your Honor, I humbly submit and accept all responsibility for my actions and I ask of you as a human of good nature, one who is in pursuit of knowledge and truth, one who is curious of the world around me, one who has limitless potential and a true means and ability to give something back to this world. I have not lived anywhere near my potential and my ability to contribute to our society and to bring people together. I ask of you your leniency in sentencing me for the crimes I have committed. I do not ask leniency of punishment; I only ask the court and your honor for the chance to remediate my poor choices and actions. To make right what I have wronged. To balance with the scales of justice and to regain balance within myself. I ask of you to allow me to serve my sentence incarcerated at home by means of ankle monitoring and or any monitoring and assurance set forth to assure the courts that I will maintain sobriety, follow all orders placed upon me by the court, and follow the terms of my sentence. I ask this of you and the court because I have a wife, a sister-in-law who is gravely disabled, and children depending on me. I have already let them down and I will not serve them any good being incarcerated in prison where I cannot provide for them and be there to support my wife in her times of need. I, my wife, my friends and family are all very certain without me present their lives would critically altered and endanger their wellbeing. I deserve to be punished and I am being punished and will for a very long time as this follows me through my life. The personal toll it has brought on my conscious has been almost unbearable as it is not in my nature to commit such horrible acts, to make such horrible unintelligible choices.

Please allow me to serve this punishment with honor by allowing me to continue allowing my wife and our children to gain their independence and confidence and hope for the future. By allowing me to serve my time in service of my family and my community and not in a prison costing my neighbors and fellow Americans hundreds of thousands of dollars. Please allow me the opportunity to atoll and remediate my actions through the struggles of our society with my wife and children who need me very much. I assure you; I swear on all that is sacred, holy, and that I love and cherish that I will work diligently to pay back the money I have stolen, I will work and love my family and honor my family and community. I will grow and commit myself to the perseverance of good and honesty and never ever again depart from a path of good will and will never divert from the path of a law-abiding citizen.

I would like to Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you are able to allow me to serve my incarceration at home. I know it will only serve to fortify my children's future and the future of my wife and her sister and allow me to truly atoll for my wrong doings.

Thank you,

Aaron Ashcraft