

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
CASE NO. 24-CR-60003-Williams/Hunt**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

ERNEST BERNARD GONDER JR.,

Defendant.

**NOTICE OF FILING LETTERS IN SUPPORT OF DEFENDANT'S UPCOMING
SENTENCING HEARING**

The Defendant, ERNEST BERNARD GONDER JR., by and through undersigned counsel hereby files the attached letters in support of his upcoming sentencing hearing.

Dated: May 1, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

s/Michael B. Cohen, Esq.

Michael B. Cohen, Esq.
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To: Honorable Judge Kathleen Williams

Re: Ernest Gonder

Re: Character reference

I am writing at the request of Ernest Gonder, a former student of mine while I was principal at Deerfield Beach high school and most recently, in the Masters' program in Public Administration in conjunction with Lynn University.

Though I am not familiar with the specifics of Mr. Gonder's case, I do feel I can adequately provide a personal reference on Mr. Gonder's behalf.

Mr. Gonder was a model student at Deerfield and made himself available to support many of the school's initiatives. He is a very talented young man and was often solicited to sing at school events and outside events such as, funerals, weddings, and other special occasions. He was a member of our football program, who worked very hard to excel on and off the field and in and out of the classroom.

After graduation (2000) I did not see Mr. Gonder again until last year when he was one of twelve people chosen by the Sheriff to take part in the Masters' program in Public Administration in a partnership with Lynn University. I was proud of Mr. Gonder and the success he had accomplished since he graduated from Deerfield, and I am very dismayed in his current situation; however, I strongly feel he qualifies for any leniency from the court.

Prior to me teaching at Lynn, I was the Executive Director for the Broward Schools Special Investigative Unit and Professional Standards Division for ten years. I had to rule on several cases of alleged teacher misconduct, and I realize how difficult decisions can be. I realize the importance of gathering all the data before making a decision that can impact one's life forever.

Again, not fully understanding the facts of Mr. Gonder's case, I would like to endorse some leniency by the court for Mr. Gonder. I feel he is a well-

intentioned individual who apparently made a mistake that may impact his life and his family.

I would gladly discuss my belief in Mr. Gonder if you need more information before making your decision.

Respectfully,

joe melita

Joe Melita, Ed. D.

March 25, 2024

Jasmine McClover

4244 Northwest 25th Place

Lauderhill, Florida 33313

Judge Kathleen M. Williams

400 N Miami Avenue

Miami, Florida 33128

Dear Honorable Judge Williams,

"What you do has far greater impact than what you say", is a quote by the great American author and educator, Stephen Covey. The meaning of this quote in its most minute sense, could be understood easily. However, knowing and experiencing Ernest Gonder could afford one the opportunity to not only interpret, but appreciate in the practical sense, this quote on a much larger scale. Fortunately for myself, I have not only known Mr. Gonder for over 15 years through my parents, but I have gotten to experience him closely as my colleague, worship leader, mentor, and friend for the past 3 years. I am writing this letter to provide a character reference and more broad understanding of Ernest Gonder, who is facing sentencing.

Many individuals can say that they are impactful. Although, relatively speaking, not many are. I have always known Mr. Gonder to be influential in the community. He has done several events for my grandparents' church over the years. I can even remember, as a young child, Mr. Gonder rising to the occasion to serve my grandparents church when no one else would. My mother and father have needed Mr. Gonder's assistance with many religious events, and he was always there, ready to serve. These are things that we often take for granted because it is expected of Pastors to always work tirelessly to serve the underprivileged, or anyone in need. However, it wasn't until 3 years ago, when I needed to lean on Mr. Gonder during my own personal battles, that I truly understood and grew to appreciate the depths of his true compassion, sacrifice, and impact on everyone around him.

I moved to Tallahassee in the year of 2011 and did not return to Broward County until 2017. Starting life over, in a new city was not an easy transition for me. Shortly thereafter, I entered an abusive relationship. The amount of years that I continued with this relationship, could not amount to the damage it caused not only physically, financially, but mentally. My self esteem was at an all-time low, my identity was lost, and quite frankly, life became to look like a dark tunnel without an end. After many bouts of therapy and self-reflection, I still couldn't find the strength nor courage to leave my situation. Three years ago, Mr. Gonder and I began servicing grieving families together. Mr. Gonder would often share his own battle with grief, losing both his father and close friend to suicide. He also used his life as examples to help other people get through the toughest times of their lives. His willingness to be vulnerable, open, and honest about his own struggles, is what initially caused me to

trust him. I trusted him not to judge me. I trusted him to show compassion. I trusted and later knew for sure that he was a man of great integrity and only wanted the best for others. I trusted and only hoped that maybe Mr. Gonder could be the light that I had been looking for at the end of my ever so dark tunnel in life.

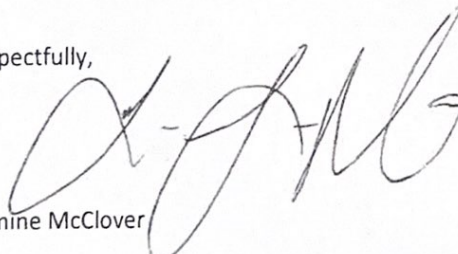
Mr. Gonder quickly took me under his wing as a mentee. Now, I was able to see the real work that he did. I began to experience Mr. Gonder on a more personal level. Mr. Gonder trained me professionally at my local church as an assistant worship leader, he helped to cultivate my leadership skills within the Broward Sheriffs Office band, he motivated me to take control of my personal health, he encouraged me to get back into therapy and remain consistent, and he became a friend that helped me to realize that my life was worth living. I eventually, with his help, was able to overcome and move past the most tumultuous time of my life. Over the past three years, I have seen several individuals positively impacted by Mr. Gonder just like I have been. Mr. Gonder has taken several individuals under his wing to encourage and help rehabilitate them. I have seen Mr. Gonder sacrifice his personal time to serve others, with nothing in return. Mr. Gonder has stepped in when no one else could nor would, on several occasions. Mr. Gonder has worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone around him could be better. I've often asked Mr. Gonder "what have you done for you lately". Mr. Gonder is committed to everyone else around him. Often forgetting to prioritize himself. To me, it seems that Mr. Gonder's life mission has been to serve, serve, and serve until he cannot anymore.

I can attest to Mr. Gonder's integrity, compassion, intentions, and good will. I sincerely request the courts reflection upon Mr. Gonder's great impact and contributions that he has had on society. There is not only a purpose for Mr. Gonder, but a need for him. I firmly believe that Mr. Gonder deserves a chance at redemption, and continued impact. The courts leniency on Mr. Gonder, will not just be leniency on one man. Instead, the courts Leniency would mean leniency on countless amounts of people who not only love and respect Mr. Gonder, but need, lean, and depend on him.

Thank You for taking the time to review my letter. Your time is much appreciated. I hope that this letter gave you a glimpse of the impact Mr. Gonder has had and reflection of his true character.

Respectfully,

Jasmine McClover

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jasmine McClover', written over the printed name.

March 11, 2024

Re: Character attestation for Ernest Gonder, Jr.

To The Honorable Judge Kathleen Williams,

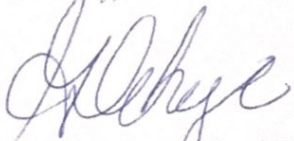
I am a licensed real estate broker for Real Estate To The Max. I have been a realtor for over 27 years. In that time, I met hundreds of people. Few have made an impression on me such as Ernest Gonder, Jr. I met Ernest in 2019, while working for a builder in Port Saint Lucie, FL. His passion to help others achieve their goal of homeownership was at a level that I had never seen before. He would compel others to not be afraid to step out of their comfort zone.

Furthermore, I have had the honor of being blessed with his gift of song, as he ministered through song, at my sister's homegoing service. His unselfish act of making it to the service, even though he had a funeral just one hour before, made me respect and appreciate him even more. My husband and I have had the pleasure of spending time with Ernest and his wife.

I understand that Ernest has pled guilty. I know he is highly remorseful. Ernest is a devoted husband and is the father of six (6) children. Family, friends, and community are everything to him. I believe this situation can be used as a tool to help others understand the seriousness of paying attention to what you sign and taking nothing for granted. Accountability is your responsibility. Ernest can speak to others in the community as an example.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Kindly consider everything stated above when making your decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Glenda Dehye', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Glenda Dehye, Broker / BK3186038
Real Estate To The Max

March 29, 2024

To: Honorable Judge Kathleen Williams

District Judge United States District Court, Southern District of Florida

From: Retired Broward Sheriff's Office Corrections Sergeant Bobby Warren

18220 Clear Brook Circle, Boca Raton Florida 33498, Bigdaddyboca1@bellsouth.net

Dear Judge Kathleen Williams,

I am writing this letter in support of Mr. Ernest B, Gonder, who is appearing before you for sentencing. As someone who has known Ernest Gonder for over 20 plus years, I believe it's important to offer insight into his character. I have had the privilege of knowing Ernest, in the capacity of a friend, a colleague and an adopted brother and a spiritual leader, in all those instances I have found him to be a person of outstanding character, integrity, and compassion.

As I stated earlier, I have known Ernest for over 20 years I will keep it brief, I'm going to provide you a few examples of Ernest character. February 2016, I lost my mother, at the time Ernest was the Lieutenant working the midnight shift, when his shift was over, he came right over to the hospital and comforted me and my family with words of encouragements as well as spiritual guidance to us, he also checked on me and family daily via telephone or dropping by and bringing food. Ernest also participated in her home going service. In October of 2020 I lost my father Ernest was right there just as he was with my mother, showing compassion and kindness toward my family in our hour of need. I can recall before my father passed on he would be telling me how Ernest would stop by check on him asking if he needed anything. I have heard countless stories like mine from many of our colleagues about how he was there for them in their hour of need. I remember in 2023 we had deputy commit suicide in the parking lot of one of our facilities, Ernest was on scene comforting and showing compassion toward staff in that trying time, he also spent countless hours with the family wearing multiple hats such as Broward Sheriff Office Lieutenant, friend and pastor he did it with such grace, humility and kindness.

Ernest also displayed an excellent work ethic, he was always working overtime as well as being a full-time pastor and raising a young family, I would sometime come by his office and I would see him multi-tasking speaking to his family and colleagues and handling a plethora of problems, such a disagreement between staff or squashing disagreements among family members.

I can remember when Ernest, lost his sister he stepped and in and raised her kids, I can remember when his father died, he took over from where his father left off and became a mentor to his younger siblings, helping mold and shape them. Ernest showed them that no matter what curve ball life might throw at you just keep swinging.

As I stated earlier Ernest is a pastor, through his ministry he has conducted mentorship classes, financial literacy classes, as well as marriage counseling to couples that need counseling before and during their marriage. Ernest has also impacted various communities throughout Dade and Broward County by participating in the Broward Sheriff's Office Band doing free concerts to help the communities, put a spotlight on issues such as high crime or gang activity in the community.

Your Honor, I know the charges against Ernest are very serious, but I believe in my heart that this behavior is out of character and not indicative of who Ernest B. Gonder truly is. I have remained in constant contact with him throughout this ordeal. Ernest has shown remorse for his actions and is looking forward to continuing with his ministry and mentoring young people.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the entirety of Ernest B, Gonder character and his contributions to society when making your decision. I am confident that he has learned from his mistake and is committed to becoming a better person. Thank you for considering my perspective. If you require any further information or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely, Bobby Warren (Retired BSO Sergeant)

Ilene Castano
2689 N.W. 49th Street.
Boca Raton, Florida 33434
Ilene.castano@yahoo.com
954-854-1668

April 8, 2024

The Honorable Kathleen Williams
Wilkie D Ferguson Jr. US Courthouse
400 N Miami Ave
Miami FL 33128

Dear Judge Kathleen Williams,

I am writing to provide a character reference for Ernest Gonder, with whom I have shared an incredibly enriching experience as colleagues in our roles as deputies at the Broward Sheriff's Office. Throughout our twenty plus years of working together, I have come to deeply appreciate Gonder's unwavering faith, compassionate nature, and positive impact on our community.

From the very beginning it was evident that he not only possessed a strong connection to his faith but also a genuine desire to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. As deputies ours shifts together were marked by laughter, playful pranks, and fond memories of our lighthearted camaraderie. During conversation about our dreams and aspirations Gonder would confide in me his goals of continuing his education, establish a business, and desire to climb the ladder to become a Captain. As he begun to advance through the ranks, these early moments filled with hope and shared encouragement, made our time as deputies the most cherished period of my career. As a lieutenant he remained true to his earlier promise of having an open-door policy. He remained connected to line staff and always conveyed the message that we were more than just a number.

Regrettably, recent events have placed Gonder in challenging position due to a misstep in judgement that resulted in legal repercussion and the loss of his career as a correctional officer. Throughout this trying time, he has shown profound remorse of his actions, accepting responsibility for the consequences that have ensued. Despite these circumstances, Gonder remained a source of support offering assistance whenever needed.

I wholeheartedly believe that Gonder is inherently a good person and deserving of a second chance. I have witnessed firsthand the positive influence he has had on my life, our community, and the lives he has touched, and I consider it a privilege to vouch for his character. I respectfully implore you to consider showing compassion and leniency in this situation, taking into account Gonder's moral integrity, dedication to serving others, and continued support of those in need.

Sincerely,



Ilene Castano

Dennis Carter, Jr.
7602 SW 8th Ct
North Lauderdale, FL. 33068
Djcarter1128@yahoo.com
954-871-8552
3/31/2024

The Honorable Kathleen Williams
Wilkie D. Ferguson Jr. U.S. Courthouse
400 N Miami Ave.
Miami, FL. 33128

Dear Judge Kathleen Williams,

I am writing to you today to express my sincere viewpoint and respect for Ernest Gonder, Jr, who stands before you in the matter of 24-cr-60003. As someone who has known Ernest Gonder, Jr for over 15 years and has had the opportunity to observe his character closely, I felt compelled to share my perspective with you.

I met Ernest Gonder, Jr in 2008 at church, where he was the pastor of Love Fellowship Worship Center at the time. Throughout the years, my wife Stacy and I served within the ministry under his leadership for 10+ years. Through those years, we have developed a very close friendship. Throughout our interactions, I have consistently witnessed Ernest Gonder, Jr demonstrate qualities of having a big heart for people, showing compassion, working hard for his family, and striving for self-development. He has always shown himself to be an example to others demonstrating that settling is not an option. His accomplishments in life have inspired many people. He has always shown a commitment to the community alongside BSO and through his entrepreneurial endeavors such as real estate and mortgage payoff inspiration.

I have witnessed Ernest Gonder, Jr help countless people through serving families during loss, giving mentorship, helping people recover from bad situations and so forth. At his core, he is an individual that motivates others to live out their greatest potential. He takes delight in witnessing others excel in life and would undoubtedly assist them in any way that he can to ensure they accomplish their goals.

It is my firm belief that Ernest Gonder, Jr is a person of good moral character who made a mistake in this instance. I do believe he is genuinely remorseful for his actions and learned from this experience. I understand the gravity of the situation and the importance of upholding the law, however, I also urge Your Honor to consider the entirety of Ernest Gonder, Jr 's character and contributions to society. I pray that you can interpret what type of person he is through the sentiments of my heart. I pray that

In conclusion, I respectfully ask for your consideration of Ernest Gonder, Jr. and for a sentence that reflects the potential for redemption. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dennis Carter, Jr.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Dennis Carter, Jr.", written in a cursive, stylized script.

Date: April 9, 2024

To: The Honorable Judge Kathleen Williams,

My name is Juan J. Williams and I have served our community in the trusted area of insurance and financial services for the past three decades. 'Your Honor', I am writing you to express my unwavering support for Ernest Gonder, a person of exceptional character and integrity whom I have had the privilege of knowing for over two decades. Throughout our enduring friendship, I have witnessed Ernest's commitment to upholding the highest standards of morality while serving as an example and mentor to others.

Ernest is not just an acquaintance; he is a devoted friend, a God-fearing man, an individual who consistently strives to do what is right, and he is driven by a strong moral compass. His dedication to ethical principles and unwavering commitment to conducting himself with integrity in every aspect of his life have left an indelible impression on all who have had the privilege of knowing him.

In the span of the 20 years that I have known him, he has demonstrated an unyielding commitment to high standards and values, guided by a deep sense of faith and a strong belief in the importance of moral conduct. Ernest's strong faith is not merely just a personal aspect of his life; rather, it serves as the foundation for his interactions with others. His actions are a testament to his belief that treating others with respect and compassion is not just a virtue but a way of life.

He is a Kind man that is always willing to give to those who are less fortunate than himself. In one instance, I have literally seen him take money out of his pocket to give to someone in need. In another display of graciousness, there was a time when he was the praise and worship leader at our church and he was told that there was no money in the budget to give to the singers as a one time gift, he then PERSONALLY financed appreciation gifts and gift cards for every member of the praise team, and he did not ask for any type of reimbursement. THAT'S THE KIND OF GUY THAT ERNEST IS! These examples are only a small sample of the things that he has done.

In the time that I have known him, he approaches every situation with a meticulous dedication to ethical standards. His commitment to abiding by what is right, is a genuine desire to contribute positively to the community and society as a whole.

It is with great concern that I have become aware of recent accusations against Ernest. I want to emphatically state that the accusations are inconsistent with the Ernest Gonder that I have known for the past two decades. The Ernest that I know is a person of unimpeachable character and integrity.

I am asking that you consider the entirety of Ernest's character and his track record of living a life guided by principles of honesty, integrity, and moral fortitude. In times of challenge, true character is revealed, and I have no doubt that Ernest will face these accusations with the same grace, resilience, and strength of character that have defined him throughout the years.

In conclusion, I stand firmly behind Ernest Gonder, and I feel very strongly that he will be a positive benefit to our community if he is allowed to have a second chance to show 'Your Honor' and this esteemed court the same.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juan J. Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Juan J. Williams



Calvary Chapel North Miami
3918 NW 167th Street
Miami Gardens, FL 33054

To: The Honorable Judge Kathleen Williams

Ref: Ernest B Gonder Jr

Most honorable Judge Williams I am writing to you as a lifelong best friend of Ernest B Gonder Jr. I've known Ernest for 29 plus years of uninterrupted friendship. I am a local pastor and community leader with zero legal experience so I will not attempt to weigh in regarding the details and nuance of Ernest's legal conundrum. I believe I can indeed speak from a place of relational equity regarding his character due to the longevity of relationship Ernest and I share.

From the time Ernest and I were merely teens trying to figure out life I can recall Ernest always being a leader, an influencer, ambitious, and admirable. Yes, admirable in the sense that even as a young teen he was unapologetic about his faith in God and has lived out the morals as well exceptionally portraying an upstanding character to validate his faith. This is Ernest. This has always been Ernest. He's by no means a perfect man, yet over many years I've had the luxury of watching him develop into a man our community would highly esteem and be proud of.

Our hometown of Deerfield Beach is not a very big city thus all the resident within the separate little communities tend to know one another. Ernest's name and reputation has transcended way beyond our small town. His work ethic, character, ethos, humanitarian heart and display of the model family has become a beacon of hope and light on a larger platform than even he may have ever imagined. Quite frankly, I would not be the man, the pastor, the community leader, the humanitarian, author and accomplished business man I am this very moment if it were not for Ernest pouring into my life. I'm only one of countless testimonies of lives Ernest has touch and changed for the better.

My aspiration and aim in this short appeal is to highlight the impact Ernest Gonder Jr has had in my life. I aim to highlight a mortal man who overcame many personal challenges and has offered hope to every context he steps into. Again, is Ernest a perfect man no. He's fallible much like anyone that has accomplished great works of the magnitude that he has. In our mortality we are prone to make mistakes or miscalculate moments. I do stand firm on this final thought. A moment of fallibility ought not overshadow a lifetime of faithfulness. Ernest has been and is faithful to his commitment. A commitment of modeling character and a calling to positively impact every life he touches

Sincerely,

Darren J Bennett

Lead Pastor of Calvary Chapel North Miami

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Darren J Bennett", written over a dark blue rectangular background.

Love Like Family

info@ccnorthmiami.org



March 12, 2024

Bibleway Temple Ministries, Inc.

Dr. Debbie Teasley, Senior Pastor

DebTeasley@Aol.Com

877 SW 2nd Terrace • Deerfield Beach, Florida 33441

954-531-6775 – Office • 407-230-0483 - Cell

The Honorable Judge Kathleen Williams
United States District Court
Southern District Of Florida

Dear Judge Williams:

Grace and peace be unto you. Thank you for allowing me to submit this letter of character reference on behalf of Ernest B. Gonder, Jr. I have had the privilege of knowing him for over twelve (12) years. Those years afforded me the opportunity to experience his passion for his father, faith, and his family. He has an endearing love for the Lord, and he is passionate about his wife, children and his mother who is currently working to recover from health challenges.

Pastor Gonder invests multiple hours teaching and training his children academically, spiritually, and musically. He gets joy in singing and playing songs with his family just as he does when he sits with them to discuss their career choices.

I am confident that Pastor Gonder, his family, and our community would positively benefit from leniency from the courts that would allow him to remain a citizen in our community and in his home.

Yours In Community Service,

Dr. Debbie Teasley
Senior Pastor



Pastor Debbie Teasley | debteasley@aol.com | (407) 230-0483