



April 2, 2021

The Honorable Marcia Cooke

United States Federal Court Judge

400 North Miami Avenue

Miami, Florida 33128

Regarding: U.S. v. David Hines

Dear Judge Cooke:

David Hines is my nephew thus I have known him since he was born 29 years ago. I write this character reference to express my immense love and support. The cold, harsh reality of his upcoming sentencing is beyond sobering and excruciatingly painful not only for him but for his mom, wife, stepson and the rest of our family. It is with a heavy heart that I write this to you.

The words that come to mind when I think of David are loving, sensitive, empathic, generous, and resilient. In the remainder of my comments, I will provide some background and then examples of situations and his behavior that have demonstrated each of these characteristics.

David was born to two very loving parents with the odds against them. His mom, my sister, was a teenager when she gave birth and his father was just 21 years old doing everything in his power to support his young family. With the help of my grandparents, his mom managed to work and finish high school. Despite their best efforts, the stress and hardships endured led to his parents' divorce when David was about 3 years old.

My grandparents provided stability for David during his toddler years until he and my sister moved to Miami to live with me when he was 4 years old.

David and his mom moved around in Miami quite a bit. At one point David went to live my brother in Alabama for a year or so to alleviate the stress my sister was under as a single mom. One of the most stabilizing and influential people in David's life growing up, was my Grandmother Rice, his great-grandmother, who lived in Niceville, Florida close to his father. During the summer months David would go stay with her and visit his father and 3 half siblings.

Grandmother Rice was an incredibly loving and steadying force for all of us grandkids, but especially for David. She was strong in her Christian faith and showed us all what it's like to live like Jesus. She was especially fond of David, and he of her. The bond they shared was incredibly special. Even as a teenager, David would go stay with her in her tiny apartment in Niceville, Florida helping her out with daily chores and walking her into church holding her hand on Sunday mornings.

As previously mentioned, David has 3 half-siblings who lived with his father. One of the children was diagnosed with severe autism at a young age. Although David never had a close relationship with his father, he felt a close connection with his half siblings along with strong sense of responsibility for their wellbeing.

These relationships give important context to the upcoming events in David's life that made a huge impact on him. In 2016, Grandmother Rice passed away. David gave a beautiful heart-felt speech at her funeral. It was a huge loss for our family in general, and a very personal loss for David. The next year, David found out that his father was diagnosed with cancer and had only a short time to live. David made several trips to Niceville to be with his dad. Although he was sad about the prospect of his father dying, his biggest concern seemed to be for his little brother with Autism, Logan. Just a few short months after his diagnosis, his father died on Father's Day 2017.

I'm not certain that David ever grieved his father's death, but it was very evident that David experienced deep sadness and concern for Logan and his future.

David was 25 years old at the time and did everything in his power to gain custody of Logan making several trips to Niceville to appear in court on his behalf. He also sought out special schools and treatment centers in Miami in hopes of moving him down to live with him. It never seemed to cross David's mind the amount of work, money and sacrifice he would be making to care for his little brother. He called me several times for advice about the situation. I tried to warn him about how difficult this would be for him; however, he wouldn't listen. He was determined to do whatever he could to save this young boy. Notwithstanding David's best efforts, custody was given to Logan's mother who had been unstable in Logan's life, but seemed to be improving. This was a tough emotional blow for David.

Despite the fact that David completed only a GED, he managed to start and run a very successful business about 7 years ago. I think his success and money made him feel proud of himself, as it should. He used it generously to help and support people like his brother Logan and others. Not long after the ordeal with Logan, David and his long-term girlfriend broke up. When this happened, he left her with everything they owned and even paid her rent, so she could remain in their apartment.

David has been a provider and support for his wife Georgette and young stepson Patrick. Not just financially but emotionally as well. One time he even called me about parenting advice regarding little Patrick. His generosity and heart for helping others in need was also demonstrated in his caring for one of his former employees who was struggling with severe depression. David would call me for advice on how to get this young man help. David gave him a job and even paid for some of his mental health treatment.

As illustrated previously, David is a good friend, husband, step-father, grandson, and brother but most of all he is a good and devoted son. His love for his mom has been consistently demonstrated in the way he regards and cares for her. As an adult has done what he can to be there for her in every way. In a letter he wrote to us, he expresses his deep concern for the agony his impending imprisonment is causing her, his wife, and his family. He has always spent holidays, birthdays, Sunday church and lunch with our family. He is very close with my two children, much younger than him, who adore him. His time away will be hugely impactful on all of us.

In his letter to our family, he also explained the circumstances surrounding the federal crime he committed taking full responsibility for what he did and expressing great remorse. I pray that my brief comments here help highlight the character of the man who stands before you today. David is a loving, sensitive, empathic, generous, Christian man with integrity who made a very bad decision.

Thank you, Your Honor, for taking these thoughts into consideration as you deliberate on the appropriate sentence. I am available to comment further if needed on David's behalf at any time.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Arango', with a stylized, cursive script.

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