

**BEFORE THE GOVERNOR AND CABINET  
OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY**

**PETITION FOR CLEMENCY  
AND  
COMMUTATION OF SENTENCE**

**IN SUPPORT OF  
Michael J. Curls, DC# 352276  
Case No: CF88-0018**

In accordance to the Florida Constitution, Article IV, Rules of Executive Clemency, requesting extraordinary invocation of Rule 17 special review for cases of exceptional merit.



**OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY**

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**REQUEST FOR REVIEW - COMMUTATION OF SENTENCE ONLY**

Effective March 9, 2011

A Request for Review for Commutation of Sentence is necessary when an applicant cannot meet the requirement of the Rules of Executive Clemency. For example, a person incarcerated is ineligible to apply for any form of Executive Clemency unless a Request for Review is granted in accordance with Rule 8 so long as he/she has completed **one third (1/3)** of the sentence imposed, or, if serving a minimum-mandatory sentence, has completed at least **one half (1/2)** of the sentence, whichever is greater. In regard to any Life sentence, an individual must complete **12-½ years** of the sentence.

The attached Request for Review form should be filled out completely and submitted with copies of certified court documents for the felony conviction for which you are seeking a Commutation of Sentence. The court documents consist of the charging document (often referred to as the State Attorney Information or Indictment), Judgment, and Sentence, and all supporting information. The court documents can be obtained from the Clerk of Court in the county where the offense occurred.

**One original of all materials is required before the request will be processed.** Any additional information should also be submitted to this office.

**Inmates:** You do not need to submit copies of the certificates you receive when you complete any educational/vocational classes. You may list them on a separate sheet of paper identifying the class and the date the certificate was received.

Once the Request for Review is accepted, the Florida Commission on Offender Review (FCOR) is required to review the case and furnish an advisory recommendation for consideration to the Clemency Board. The applicant and attorney, if being represented in this process, will be notified as to whether the recommendation from the Commission is favorable or unfavorable. Please understand that this is not an adversarial process and you do not have to have an attorney for the process.

A formal hearing before the Clemency Board will not be scheduled unless the Request for Review is granted by the Governor and one Board Member, at which time the case will be referred to the Commission for a full background investigation, report and recommendation.

Any person who has been denied a Request for Review under Rule 8 may not apply for another review for at least **five** years from the date the prior request was denied.

**ALL INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED WITH THIS REQUEST BECOMES THE PROPERTY OF THE OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY AND WILL NOT BE RETURNED. PLEASE KEEP COPIES OF YOUR DOCUMENTS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.**

**PLEASE DO NOT PUT DOCUMENTS IN SHEET PROTECTORS  
OR ANY TYPE OF NOTEBOOK OR BINDER  
YOU MAY EITHER STAPLE OR USE BINDER CLIPS**

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THE ANSWER  
TO CRIME AND YOUTH CRIME IN AMERICA  
with Proposal and Support Letters

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## INTRODUCTION

**COMES NOW**, Petitioner, Michael J. Curls, before Governor Ron DeSantis and his cabinet, the Executive Clemency Board, and humbly presents the following Petition for Clemency and Commutation of Sentence, in accordance to the Florida Constitution, Article IV, Rules of Executive Clemency, and hereby requests extraordinary invocation of Rule 17 special review for cases of exceptional merit. Since all possible legal remedies have been pursued and denied, and since Michael is serving six (6) consecutive life sentences without eligibility for parole, this request is Michael's last and only hope for release and redemption. His first Petition for Clemency was filed in 2005, and was denied in 2009.

While awaiting the mandated five years from the date of denial to refile another petition, Michael continued to maintain model inmate status and to invest his time positively and productively, making significant contributions to crime prevention. After refiling his second petition in 2014, the Clemency Office informed him that, due to a rule revision requiring 12.5 years to be served on a life sentence, since his life sentences were imposed consecutively, he is no longer eligible to file for clemency consideration through the normal procedure until he has first served seventy-five (75) years.

This year, 2020, Michael will be 59 years old, and has already served more than 32 continuous years for armed robberies which involved no physical harm to anyone. The Sentencing Guidelines scored Michael to be sentenced within the 9 to 12-year range, but the Court imposed an extreme upward departure of 6 consecutive lives, 15 more years, community control, and probation to follow (see, Exhibit A, Sentencing Guidelines Score Sheet; Reasons for Departure Information; Judgment and Sentencing Records).

Even though he did not physically injure the victims, Michael fully understands the seriousness of his crimes, as well as the many different facets of harm he caused. Furthermore, he has not only developed real and genuine remorse for his victims, but for all victims of crime, and he has dedicated nearly 30 years working to provide The Answer to that problem.

Therefore, since all legal avenues of relief have been exhausted, and because he is no longer eligible to seek clemency consideration through the normal procedure, and based upon the reasons, mitigating information, and exceptional merits henceforth presented, Michael Curls humbly comes now and prays that the Executive Clemency Board will grant invocation of a Clemency Rule 17 special review for commutation of sentence in order to facilitate his release from the Florida Department of Corrections.

## HISTORY OF THE CASE

Michael Curls takes full responsibility for his crimes, and every bad choice he made as a young man. He is therefore hesitant to share the details of the horrific trauma he experienced in his youth, and how it affected him psychologically and impacted his life (because, to him, it sounds too much like an excuse). It does, however, bear mentioning, as it is an important part of the history of this case.

As with many other people, Michael did experience certain abuses as a child. However, as will later be presented through expert testimony, Michael suffered severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a teenager, when both his parents were killed a year apart. On December 19, 1977, when Michael was 16 years of age, his father was killed in an automobile accident. A year later, almost to the day, on December 21, 1978, his mother was also killed in a head-on collision - on the same road his dad had been killed on the year before.

In both of instances, young Michael was permitted to view the broken and bloody bodies of his parents, leaving those haunting images forever imprinted in his mind. Psychological evaluations have concluded that those events were so traumatic, especially at such a crucial age, that they produced extreme PTSD, which was the primary cause of Michael's subsequent addictions and criminal behaviors.

Having developed virtually no coping skills or responsible maturity for dealing with such emotional crisis, Michael attempted to escape the demons of his inner turmoil through drugs, alcohol, and reckless irresponsible living. His destructive behavior quickly resulted in drug and alcohol related trouble with the law: DUI's, arrests, probation violations, dark depression, desperation, and crimes that have been characterized by psychologists as "crying out for help." Yet through it all, Michael's court-appointed Guardian of Estate, Personal Representative, probate and estate attorneys, and even certain family members were more concerned with profiting from his inheritance than getting him the professional help he needed.

Consequently, Michael predictably continued his downward plunge, squandered everything he had, and found himself at 22 years of age standing before the Court on a technical violation of probation. After learning that his fiancée had been brutally raped and murdered, Michael got drunk and absconded from a restitution center. The State Attorney's office requested the maximum 7 years in prison that the charges carried according to the then new Sentencing Guidelines. The Court, however, imposed 2 life sentences and 15 years.

At 22 years of age, Michael was sent to prison with no light at the end of the tunnel. With his blond hair, blue eyes, and weighing only 140lbs., he was an instant target for all of the most violent and deadly homosexual predators the State of Florida has ever locked up. Michael had only 2 choices: submit to the deadly threats and allow himself to be sexually abused and passed around to the

highest bidder, or fight for his manhood. He was all alone and terrified of both choices. But he was most terrified of what would happen to him if he did not fight.

So, he forced his fears aside and fought for his life as a man. He served nearly 5 stress-filled years constantly forced to defend himself against violent attacks, attempted rapes, and other adversities. At one point he suffered a complete nervous breakdown and was committed to a psychiatric ward, where the limited English-speaking doctor diagnosed him with the words, "You got attitude problem."

Shortly after that, Michael was suddenly and unexpectedly brought back to court, his life sentences were overturned as being illegal, he was resentenced to the 7-year maximum that he should have received to begin with, and he was released on November 11, 1987 with another chance at freedom. Or so it might seem. With no money, no home, no job, and no transitional preparation at all; with his already severe PTSD only being intensified and exacerbated by his traumatic prison experience, Michael had no real chance at all. He was a recidivist waiting to happen, and he did not wait long. Forty-four days after his release, on December 24, 1987, during the anniversary week of his parents' deaths, Michael committed the first of a string of armed robberies. A psychological evaluation conducted prior to his sentencing indicated that he had suffered from an "anniversary reaction" related to PTSD during the time period when haunting memories increased his stress to desperate levels (see, Exhibit B, Court Testimony of Dr. Thomas McClain, pages 43-70).

As Michael asserted to the Court in his final statement prior to being sentenced, Dr. McClain's testimony had enlightened him. For the first time, and in light of his own seemingly senseless behavior, Michael was beginning to realize the true depth of his psychological problems. And he was determined to do whatever was necessary to address and correct his issues, to seek the help he now knew he needed, to recover from all addictions, eliminate his criminal propensities, and to stop creating victims (see, Exhibit C, Court Testimony of Michael Curls, pages 77-80).



## MICHAEL'S TRANSITION

At his sentencing, Michael plead only for a little light at the end of the tunnel -- a release date he could work toward and for which he could prepare himself. The Sentencing Guidelines called for 9 to 12 years (Exhibit A), but he was once again sentenced to grow old and die in prison. This time, however, he understood that his real enemies resided within his own mind, and even with no light at the end of the tunnel, he resolved himself to defeat his demons once and for all.

For someone like Michael Curls, with all the tragedy and trauma he had suffered, and with the severity of his PTSD, coupled with being incarcerated in an environment that is not very conducive to true rehabilitation and positive change, Michael's objectives were no small feat. Admittedly, his change process included some ups and downs, and even a couple of hard falls along the way. But he kept picking himself up and taking another step in the right direction; kept seeking the help he needed kept striving, learning, and growing in character development. He successfully completed every pertinent program, including a 12-month Tier 4 drug and alcohol treatment program, years of AA and NA, Life Skills classes, Anger Management, many faith-based programs and classes, and much more (see, Exhibit D, Partial Record of Certifications and Achievements).

In 1992, Michael began to seek the God he believed in but knew very little about. Shortly thereafter, he was led to work with at-risk youth, and with that work came a concern for others that he had never known before. In 1993, Michael was asked to help start the first Lifers' Group organization in the Florida prison system. As a charter member, he was elected the first Chairman of Youth Awareness and began to excel in the areas of program development, coordination, leadership, and training quality facilitators and mentors. In fact, one of the at-risk youth intervention programs, a prison tour program for first-time offenders and probationers, was so successful that it was recognized by the FDC Head Office and approved for statewide expansion.

Along with his passion for helping our nation's youth, Michael Curls also developed compassion for his fellow prisoners, especially those that are bound by addictions and criminality and do not know how to break free. Having experienced, himself, the darkest depths of addiction, crime, and psychological disorder, but having done the difficult work, learned the hard lessons, and traveled the path of rehabilitation and recovery, Michael has dedicated the past twenty-seven (27) years to educating himself and others, service work, and the development of real world employability skills. His last disciplinary report (DR) was in 1999, and he has been drug and alcohol free for over 20 years.

## CHARACTER REFERENCES AND SUPPORT LETTERS

In the work that he does and the services he provides, Michael often expresses and displays his deep remorse, not only for the victims left in the wake of his own crimes, but for all victims of crime and injustice. He not only expresses it in words, but even more so through the way he has facilitated programs of positive change to thousands of hard-core criminals over the years. When asked, "Why change?", Michael answers, "So I never hurt anyone else ever again." There are many people who have recognized his sincerity and passion for true change and helping others come to that same place. Michael's advocates consist not only of family and friends, but also FDC staff and officials, an FDC Deputy Secretary (now retired), Senators and prisoners, Christians and Muslims and nonbelievers alike.

The following is a compilation of excerpts taken from character references and support letters written over a period of nearly 20 years, thereby proving a steadfast consistency of faith, service, and integrity that has passed the test of time and can be counted on to endure through even the most trying challenges and circumstances.

One of Michael's strongest advocates, who supported his work at Hardee Correctional Institution while he was Warden there, then continued that support while serving as Deputy Secretary of the Florida Department of Corrections, recently wrote the following:

*My name is Timothy H. Cannon; I was employed with the Florida Department of Corrections for 27 years. I retired as Deputy Secretary. During my employment I had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people. One such person was inmate Michael Curls. I first met him early in my career while I was a Correctional Officer and our paths crossed throughout my career. I saw true change in his character and was amazed at his transformation and his willingness to help others effect change in their own lives. I have seen his approach to changing lives and know it gets results.*

Ann Rogers is another person who has known Michael for more than 20 years. In 2014 she wrote:

*. . . I have watched him battle and persevere through rejection after rejection as he has tried to gain his freedom. And, I have seen him use those struggles to not only improve himself, but the lives of those around him. Michael is not his "own man" anymore -- he is "God's man". I firmly believe that Michael's goal is not solely to get out of prison, but to get out of prison to help others -- to prevent them from making the wrong decisions, choosing the wrong paths, harming others, and wasting their own lives . . . Inside the prison walls, Michael impacts hundreds of men; outside the prison walls, he could impact thousands of young men. . . .*

Michael constantly places himself in positions of service. From 2005 to 2009, while working as a Transition Aide, teaching and helping prisoners prepare for reentry into society, one of his supervisors wrote:

*I am writing this letter to offer my support for Michael Curls' clemency. In the two years I've known Michael, I have seen that he is a sincere Christian, a follower of God he is dedicated to his faith and helping others . . . I wholeheartedly support his efforts toward gaining clemency, and I believe that Michael Curls would be a valuable asset to society. . . .*

In 2009, John Gillespie, another Transition supervisor, wrote:

*. . . Michael Curls is one of my teachers and an excellent one. You don't know Michael's heart as well as I do and he's a very sincere person and doesn't play games. . . .*

Ken Cooper, now deceased, who was well known in corrections as a consultant and for his work in transitional housing and prison ministry, asserts in his letter of support:

*I offer my highest recommendation for Michael Curls . . .  
He demonstrates the attitude of a changed man and we  
have seen the depth of his remorse and contrition for his  
crimes . . . Michael Curls fits the profile perfectly of an  
inmate who readjusts to society and does well upon release.*

Wesley Collins was a student/participant in one of the programs Michael helped facilitate. He was inspired to write his own letter, which includes the following:

*Michael Curls is the lead facilitator of the DIRECT program  
here at Hardee C.I. While participating in the program I saw  
Mike convey the information in a way that stressed the  
importance of change . . . For over 18 months, I have observed  
Mike on a daily basis. He has never wavered, nor has he  
vacillated, in his commitment to doing what is right. Even in  
times that I knew he was hurting deeply, Mike took the time  
to coach me and counsel me in my struggle for change.  
When lesser men would have been ruled by their emotions  
and reverted to criminal behavior, Mike was steadfast in his  
determination to think through each situation thoroughly  
and plan the best course of action for his family and for  
himself. Mike modeled true change for us.*

Another inmate for whom Michael facilitated a 5-month DIRECT program wrote the following:

*I realize how absurd I must sound when I tell you that there is someone here, in prison, who is not only a genuine man of God, but a powerful and gifted communicator . . . He has an exceptional understanding of how troubled teens think. He reaches places in them that few, if any, have ever reached or can reach . . . He makes change welcoming and even desirable . . . He has the potential to alter this country's youth crime problem.*

Officer R. Williams, an Education Department supervisor, who was Michael's direct supervisor on a daily basis, provides the following character reference:

*During the past twelve (12) years -- the entire time he has been at Hardee C.I. -- Michael Curls has consistently conducted himself with integrity and excellent moral character. He is responsible and very dependable, and he does not compromise in doing the right thing. Inmate Curls has earned the respect of both inmates and staff as well . . . Based on my experience in corrections, I know game when I see it. Based on what I see and know about Michael Curls, I believe he's the real deal and deserves another chance at freedom.*

Many more people have contributed character references and support letters on Michael's behalf. All of them confirm absolute trust and belief in his rehabilitation, steadfast responsibility, dependability, and service to others (see, Exhibit E, Character References and Support Letters).

## **EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

Another essential element necessary to request and receive a Rule 17 special review for clemency has to do with the criteria for establishing "exceptional merit". Unfortunately, not only the prison environment, but also certain security policies and procedures tend to make it nearly impossible for an inmate to achieve anything that might qualify as truly exceptional. Pursuing educational achievements, developing godly character, becoming responsible, completing programs, teaching, facilitating, mentoring, and staying out of trouble are things that are expected. Responsible people don't get any medals for doing the right thing. For an inmate to accomplish something exceptional, despite all the obstacles and hindrances standing against such things, requires absolute commitment and self-sacrifice, steadfast determination, and a never-say-never work ethic that is willing to strive for many years toward a goal.

## **THE ANSWER TO CRIME AND YOUTH CRIME IN AMERICA**

Early in Michael's journey towards spiritual and character development, while working as Chairman of Youth Awareness for the Sumter Correctional Institution Lifers' Group, he was blessed to introduce an at-risk youth intervention concept that, within the first 6 months, received strong counselor support from 14 rehabilitation agencies in 11 different communities as being the most effective criminal behavior deterrent they had ever witnessed. All employed this concept within their own program structures and were nearly knocking the gates down trying to schedule all of their young clients to participate in the program. During this time, the Columbine massacre occurred, and Michael knew that the concept he had developed needed to extend beyond prison and into society in order to assist the counseling community to prevent such horrific events.

Michael has invested 27 years in the conceptual and actual programs development, and in writing the book entitled THE ANSWER TO CRIME AND YOUTH CRIME IN AMERICA. His vision involves a state- and nationwide Relational Assistance Service that best utilizes those who have been there, who have traveled the path of youthful offenders to its bitter end and can most effectively help to reach and teach their young counterparts the truth -- before it's too late. After submitting proposals to all levels of FDC in 2005, to no avail, Michael received an inquiry from Dr. Regan S. Wilson, a psychologist in Kentucky who had been contracted by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to research at-risk youth intervention concepts that utilize ex-offenders working in conjunction with counselors.

Though Michael had received no response on his proposal, one of Dr. Wilson's contacts at the FDC Head Office informed him that Michael Curles had an innovative idea that he might want to look at. After researching nearly one hundred concepts from all over the nation, Dr. Wilson recommended THE ANSWER as one of three that should be considered for national implementation. Beginning with FDC's Director of Programs, Elijah Turner, approving his prison tour program for statewide expansion in 1993, Michael's youth intervention concept had now earned even more credibility, with national possibilities.

Michael Curles has diligently pursued his vision of THE ANSWER for 27 years, now, and this year, with the help and support of many friends and advocates who have joined his cause, they were finally able to print a high-quality format of THE ANSWER in book form. This book, along with the Programs Manual, is now being reviewed by the FDC Head Office, and it is hoped that Michael will soon have an opportunity to help develop a pilot program, which can much more effectively be accomplished with Michael working from the position of a freedom. And his vision for the development of a state- and nationwide Relational Assistance Service can only be pursued outside of prison.

THE ANSWER has earned the support of Senator Dennis Baxley, Senator Keith Perry, retired FDC Deputy Secretary Timothy H. Cannon, and many others (see, Exhibit F, Exceptional Achievements, THE ANSWER TO CRIME AND YOUTH CRIME IN AMERICA, with the New Life Project Programs Manual, and visit the website, at [www.theanswertocrime.org](http://www.theanswertocrime.org)).

## **The DIRECT Program**

While at Hardee C.I., from 2002 through 2014, Michael was deeply involved with the DIRECT Program (DIRECT being an acronym for Direct Involvement Reduces the Effects of Criminal Thinking). He claims that, along with his faith in God, the DIRECT Program presented by far the most powerful and on-point information he has ever come across for understanding and correcting the many psychological components of criminality. After completing this intensive program, Michael expanded his research and attained a remarkable knowledge and empathic understanding of criminal psychology and addiction related issues.

Mr. Curls went on to become a very prolific writer and author of many meaningful, motivational, and instructive works. For 12 years he worked and served as a DIRECT facilitator, teaching hard-core criminal offenders how to identify, deter, and correct their criminal thinking errors. In 2006, then Warden Timothy H. Cannon appointed Mr. Curls to be the DIRECT Program Coordinator. He subsequently invested an entire year building upon the foundational information to write an original and much improved format. Being an Inmate Teaching Assistant (ITA) graduate, he attached the Florida Education Department's pertinent Sunshine State Standards for education to the DIRECT Program and proposed it as being an effective means for producing more responsible students in prison. The program was approved by FDC, accredited, and assigned the RTC-115 course code number (RTC = Reduction of Criminal Thinking).

Over a period of 12 years' service at Hardee C.I., Michael trained dozens of facilitators and mentors, and helped to introduce more than 1,500 offenders to the life-changing information of DIRECT (see, Exhibit F, Exceptional Achievements, The DIRECT Program, contained in the New Life Project Programs Manual).

## **The Re-Entry Assistance Program / LifePath Group Project**

Ever mindful of his long range vision for THE ANSWER, much of Michael's work in programs development was done with a dual purpose: 1) to assist incarcerated offenders to achieve true and lasting change -- from criminality to responsibility; and 2) develop and prove various conceptual elements to be incorporated into THE ANSWER's programs network. After completing his work on the DIRECT Program format, Michael turned his attention the FDC's new focus on Re-Entry. Based on his own successful change process, he conceptualized and wrote the Re-Entry Assistance Program in hopes of helping FDC to reach its goals for reducing recidivism. The concept involved a programs networking system designed to progress offenders through the various stages of an effective change process, until the process is complete and permanent positive change has been achieved.



Shortly after writing the program, the title LifePath Group Project was applied to the concept, sponsorship was attained, and implementation was approved. As of 2014, when Michael transferred to Sumter C.I., LifePath was in its fourth year of development. It was 549 active members strong, with more than 500 inmates participating in 15 different programs and classes targeting various areas of education and character improvement. During a time when cell phones, drugs, violence, and gang activity were escalating, the LifePath Group Project produced the largest, most well behaved, and lowest security risk block of inmates at Hardee C.I. Mr. Curles was highly involved in leadership, coordination, training, facilitation, and personal mentoring. As with his previous involvement with the Lifers' Group at Sumter C.I., God blessed his work and LifePath also prospered and eventually evolved into an approved parole eligible program initiative (see, Exhibit F, Exceptional Achievements, LifePath Accreditation and Course Code Proposal; Supporting Letters; and Classification Officer's Comments).

## **FACILITATOR AND MENTOR TRAINING INITIATIVE**

Another one of Michael's significant contributions to Hardee C.I., FDC, LifePath, and THE ANSWER's New Life Project is the Facilitator and Mentor Training Initiative. This program was written as a guide to educate and train qualified ex-offenders in the four-phase reaching and teaching method that Mr. Curles has found most effective for assisting offenders and at-risk youth in the difficult process of change. This initiative has been incorporated as part of the training curriculum for THE ANSWER's Relational Assistance Service (see, Exhibit F, Exceptional Achievements, Facilitator and Mentor Training Initiative, contained in the New Life Project Programs Manual).

## **PRIDE ENTERPRISES CORPORATE JOB SKILLS TRAINING**

After 12 solid years of positive growth, accomplishments, and service work at Hardee C.I., Michael sensed that his job was done there. So, he wrote his classification officer and requested a good adjustment transfer back to Sumter C.I., where his positive journey began. Normally, the waiting list for such a transfer means a waiting period of at least couple of years. Michael wrote the Warden and Deputy Secretary Cannon, and said, "It's been a good 12-year ride here at Hardee, all positive, with a lot growth and accomplishments. But I sense that I've done just about all that I was meant to do here, and I'd like to leave on a positive note. This is not my first rodeo. God has blessed me here, has blessed the work you've allowed me to do, and has given me great favor with you. Unfortunately, that also means that I'm not making friends with the colonel, who is not very supportive of programs and may soon have me on a bus heading somewhere I don't want to be. I'd like to go back to Sumter, where my journey began, and have submitted a request for a good adjustment transfer."

Two weeks later, through the favor God gave him with the Warden and Deputy Secretary Cannon, Michael was at Sumter C.I., where he has continue his positive pursuits.

Mr. Curls immediately landed a coveted paying job (starting at twenty cents an hour) at PRIDE Central Florida Graphics, where he invested the next 5 years learning, training, and becoming certified in the following areas of the printing industry:

-- 2014-15: Job Planning and Forms Management; processing sales and production orders; coordinating and overseeing production; Customer Service training and communications; GS38 Envelope Converter Operator

-- 2015-19: Purchasing Clerk, responsible for processing all purchase orders; attaining working knowledge of all equipment, machinery, and production materials; researching, pricing, and troubleshooting in tandem with vendors and corporate Accounts Payable department, with dozens of daily emails and phone communications; shipping, receiving, invoicing, and meeting deadlines

-- Computer Skills: Microsoft Dynamics Database (navigation, input and processing); all Microsoft Business applications (Access, Word, Excel)

-- Vocational Certifications: Purchasing Clerk; General Clerk; Data Entry Specialist; Customer Service Specialist; Secretary, Telemarketing; Fork Lift Operator; Ready to Work Gold Certification (see, Exhibit F, Exceptional Achievements, Resume; PRIDE Enterprises Reference Letter; Certifications).

## **TWO YEAR PAROLE ELIGIBLE LIFERS' PROGRAM**

Michael Curls was sentenced in 1988, when life sentences for capital first degree murder and capital rape of a child 12 years old and under were specifically made eligible by law for parole. All other life sentences, between 1983 and 1994, for less severe offenses, were excluded from any eligibility or hope of parole consideration. It wasn't until 1994, when legislators apparently realized that Florida was operating under an unjust and disproportionate sentencing system, that parole for all life sentences was abolished. Unfortunately, for Michael and many others, no concessions or reparations were made for those convicted of lesser offenses than capital murder and child rape prior to 1994. Consequently, now, 33 years after his sentencing, Mr. Curls is not only watching some of these capital offenders being set free, but he is helping to prepare them for that opportunity.

Even without parole eligibility -- without that hope -- Michael has voluntarily enrolled in and successfully completed the 2-year parole eligible Lifers' Program at Sumter C.I. Furthermore, for the past 4 years, he has served these lifers as a DIRECT facilitator, helping them identify, deter, and correct their criminal thinking errors so they have a better chance to succeed in society without creating any more victims.

Mr. Curls not only talks the talk, but walks the walk as well. He lives as a responsible example of the change process he facilitates. As a man of faith, he exemplifies what God can do in and through our lives. He is a leader and role model for all the men who are housed in the Lifers' dorm, and throughout the prison. He counsels and ministers every day, even without the hope of parole or light at the end of the tunnel. Because this is the man he has worked to become, and this is the man he is (see, Exhibit F, Exceptional Achievements, Lifers' Program Graduation Certificate and Certificate of Appreciation for services rendered).

## WHY SHOULD CLEMENCY BE GRANTED

\* **Nature of the Crimes:** Michael's crimes were committed in a manner of which no physical injury occurred. In fact, arrest reports show that, when Michael was confronted with resistance, he retreated and fled the scene because he was unwilling to physically harm the clerk. These were not the crimes of a hardened, irredeemable criminal, but of a young man whose life had been plagued by tragedy resulting in severe PTSD and treatable drug addiction. Michael knows that this does not excuse his behavior, but it should militate and mitigate against forcing him to spend the rest of his natural life in prison.

\* **Remorse:** Michael's deep remorse is often expressed, not merely in words but in actions. Teaching criminal offenders how to develop true remorse for the victims of their own crimes -- helping them to understand the depth and magnitude of the pain and suffering they have caused -- is an essential element of the change process that Mr. Curls facilitates. However, in order for him to effectively teach others, it first had to become real within himself.

\* **Rehabilitation:** It is clear to everyone who has known Michael Curls over the past 20 years that he has achieved an unwavering level of integrity and responsible maturity that is based and built on the solid Rock of faith; on the work he has done to build and strengthen his character; and by helping others do the same. Though he admittedly faltered on occasion during his struggle to defeat his demons and conquer the challenge of change, he did not give up. He sought the help he needed and eventually succeeded in healing and renewing his mind, correcting his psychological disorders (PTSD), and habituating a whole new and responsible way of thinking and living.

\* **Service:** Michael has served and contributed as much or more than any inmate ever could. He has helped thousands of offender's changes for the better, thereby positively impacting families and society in ways that no one can know. He has greatly assisted FDC in reaching its goals and objectives for the Re-Entry, reducing recidivism, and creating a safer society. If Michael's many achievements do not meet the "exceptional merit" criteria required for a Clemency Rule 17 commutation of sentence, then there is no such hope for any prisoner and no reason for them to change. Michael's hope is to continue providing his services upon release, first, by pursuing his 27-year vision to develop a state- and nationwide Relational Assistance Service that will assist at-risk youth intervention to reach and save more than ever before. He also plans to offer his hard-earned knowledge, experience, and expertise in successful criminal rehabilitation and programs development to FDC, criminal justice, and anyone else who has ears to hear the truth. Armed with the power of his testimony, Michael Curls will visit prisons with a message of faith and hope for those who are willing to do the work, and he will be a powerful example of the blessings and miracles that can happen for those who truly change their lives.

\* **Amount of Time Served:** Michael has been incarcerated on these charges since January 2, 1988. He has served more than 32 continuous years for his crimes. He has already paid a huge price on his debt to society, and plans to pay even more in service upon his release. Mr. Curis has learned his lessons well, has turned his negatives into positives, and the reality of his rehabilitation is exemplified in everything he does. Michael's continued incarceration serves no other purpose than to perpetuate a punishment that is clearly excessive.

\* **Release Plan:** Mr. Curis knows that he is greatly blessed with a large and solid support group consisting of family, friend, and advocates who are willing and able to assist him with housing, transportation, provisions, transitional needs, support in pursuit of his goals, and anything else he might need in order to be successful. Michael's release plan includes the following goals and objectives:

**Short-term (first year):**

- > Assimilate into society and increased decision making
- > Establish sufficient financial income
- > Connect with spiritual support and accountability group
- > Meet all conditions of release
- > Express thanks and appreciation to all who have stood with me
- > Make amends to those I have hurt
- > Begin purchasing initial necessities
- > Develop workable budget, with at least 10% savings
- > Driver's license and dependable transportation
- > Provide personal relational services to at-risk youth agencies
- > Promote and pursue development of THE ANSWER
- > Offer services to FDC, criminal justice, and others
- > Investigate public speaking possibilities
- > Move into my own home
- > Finish writing and publish my autobiography

**Mid-term (first 3 years):**

- > Assess short-term accomplishment and modify goals, if needed
- > Assess progress after one year -- where I am, where I want to be
- > Develop an action plan with updated goals and objectives
- > Continue service and development of THE ANSWER
- > Pursue public speaking opportunities, conduct seminars, etc.
- > Write and publish another book

**Long-term:**

- > Reassess all previous goals and accomplishments, revise if needed
- > Buy a home and newer vehicle
- > Establish sufficient income producing enterprise for retirement

Upon release, Michael hopes to hit the ground running. He has much to offer society and would like to be able to make himself available to anyone who wants to utilize his services. He therefore hopes not to have too many restrictions that will hinder his desire to contribute and serve as the asset he is capable of being. His housing and provisions are secure, but he is willing to live in transitional housing, if necessary (see, Exhibit G, Prisoners of Christ Transitional Housing Acceptance Letter).

## CONCLUSION

Michael Curls understands that granting him Rule 17 commutation of sentence will weigh heavily upon a certainty that he is in fact completely rehabilitated and will not reoffend. Therefore, aside from the fact that he has not used drugs or alcohol, and has conducted himself as a model inmate, with no disciplinary reports, for more than 20 continuous years; aside from his many exceptional achievements and the thousands of lives he has impacted for good, Mr. Curls has had an extensive and in-depth psychological evaluation conducted for the purpose of clemency consideration.

Highly respected PTSD specialist, Dr. Elizabeth A. McMahon, Ph.D., invested 90 hours interviewing, testing, evaluating, and preparing a 42-page comprehensive report. Her conclusions confirm the psychologist's assertions at Michael's sentencing hearing, that his addictions and crimes were primarily the result of severe PTSD. Dr. McMahon concluded that Michael has since completely rehabilitated himself and is no more risk of reoffending than anyone else who has never committed a serious crime (see, Exhibit H, Psychological Report).

Though Dr. McMahon's report was completed in 2009, the same year that his first clemency petition was denied, Mr. Curls has maintained his model inmate status and has continued in his positive direction and outstanding service and leadership ever since. Because that is the man he has become. Furthermore, the concepts he has developed for a THE ANSWER TO CRIME AND YOUTH CRIME IN AMERICA are real solutions that will contribute greatly to crime prevention and creating a safer society -- something that is sorely needed right now. His work will help prevent school shootings and crime in every form; it will inspire more prisoners to pursue change and responsibility, thereby lowering the rate of recidivism.

In light of the many mitigating factors involved in Michael's criminal history, the sheer magnitude of tragedy and consequence from which he has risen, and the incredible accomplishments he has thus far achieved, it is clear that Michael Curls is a case of exceptional merit. The State of Florida could ask no more from any inmate in terms of rehabilitation, achievements, service, and contributions to the betterment of society than that which Mr. Curls has already provided. Therefore, he prays for mercy, grace, and a commutation of his sentence that will facilitate his release from prison.

Respectfully and Prayerfully Submitted,

Michael J. Curls DC# 352276  
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